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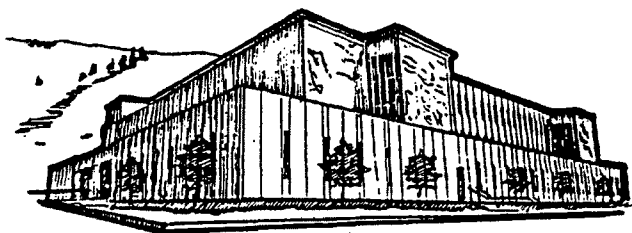
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University of
Montana

WOMEN'S ROLE IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS IN MONTANA

By

Anette With

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements


for the degree of

Master of Arts in Journalism

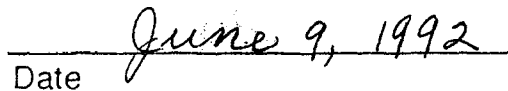
University of Montana

1992

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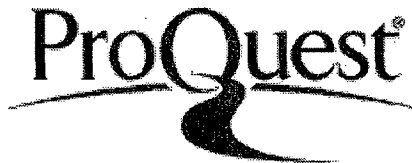


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INTRODUCTION

Female reporters - national trends.

The status of women in the newsroom has become an important topic of research in journalism.¹ While previous studies have focused on large metropolitan daily newspapers, very little research has dealt with the roles women play in smaller newsrooms such as characterize daily newspapers in Montana. However, national studies suggest that women hold a large number of entry-level positions in smaller papers and "smaller newspapers to some extent predict the future of larger newspapers since editors of the smaller newspapers hire more entry level people who gradually move up."² For these reasons it is important to ascertain the role of women in local newspapers in Montana as well. The thesis will attempt to do so by

¹American Society of Newspaper Editors, "The Changing Face of the Newsroom," (May 1989); The Women, Men, and Media Research Group (University of Southern California), "Women, Men and Media" (April 1989); Kay Mills, A Place in the News: From the Women's Pages to the Front pages, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1990).

²American Society of Newspaper Editors, "The Changing Face of the Newsroom," (ASNE, May 1989), p.28.

looking at three local newspapers--the *Great Falls Tribune*, the *Missoulian*, and the *Helena Independent Record*.

Women's issues were in the news in the summer of 1991. The issue of equal opportunity was raised by debate in Congress on the bill Bush gave notoriety to by coining the "quota bill."³ This bill--an affirmative action bill--would require employers to hire a certain percentage (quota) of women on their staff. The U.S. Labor Department's report on gender in top management in some of America's largest corporations show that women comprise only three percent of top executives and prompted discussions about a "glass ceiling initiative."⁴ The "glass ceiling" refers to the subtle discrimination that forms a rigid barrier for women attempting to reach positions beyond middle management.⁵ A recent article in *U.S. News and World Report* said the U.S. Labor Department's report states that the "glass ceiling" does exist for women and speculated that partly due to this fact women no longer possess the ambition to reach top executive positions.⁶ All those issues made it to the front pages of newspapers and magazines nationwide and suggest that interest in women's roles has gained the status of newsworthiness.

³Kenneth T. Walsh, "Scouting Thomas," U.S. News and World Report, 111, no. 3 (July 15, 1991), 23.

⁴Amy Saltzman, "Trouble at the Top," U.S. News and World Report, 110, no. 23 (June 17, 1991), 40-48.

⁵*Ibid*, 41.

⁶*Ibid*, 42.

However, women's role in the media has been an issue of concern and debate in national news organizations since the Kerner Commission's report in 1968. Part of this report from the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders was directed at news coverage, and it called for more diverse representation in the newspapers:

Along with the country as a whole, the press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white men's eyes and a white perspective. That is no longer good enough. The painful process of readjustment that is required of the American news media must begin now. They must make a reality of integration-- in both their product and personnel.⁷

~~.....~~ The issue of female representation is with us 23 years later despite the fact that female employment at newspapers increased from 22 percent in 1971 to 35 percent in 1989.⁸ It has also been featured on the recent programs of many national conferences: The American Society of Newspaper Editors' (ASNE) annual convention in 1988 featured a panel discussion on women in the newsroom. The Women, Men and Media convention in 1989 was devoted to how women are hired, promoted and covered in the news. The Associated Press Managing Editors' annual convention in 1990 had a "News for Women"

⁷Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968, p. 211.

⁸ASNE, The Changing Face, p. 27.

panel.⁹ ASNE conducts an annual survey over a one-month period that analyzes women's contributions to the news. Aside from the question of equality of representation, mass media researchers Suzanne Pingree and Robert Hawkins believe the data collected in these kinds of studies take on an added symbolic importance when assessing the role women play in American society:

With the basic fact in mind that there are not more men than women in the world, an audience confronted with the disproportion in news media attention to men might conclude that men are more important, more worthy of attention than women; or they might conclude that men are more involved in the significant events of the world; or simply that men's activities are news and women's are not.¹⁰

It is still true that "the people who gather and process the news today are predominantly white and male, but women and

⁹Phyllis Messinger, "Women in Management leads to lively discussion at Editor's Meeting," Associated Press, 13 April, 1988; "Women, Men and Media," April 1989, M.L. Stein, "Reaching Women Readers," Editor and Publisher, 123, no. 46, 17 Nov. 1990, 18.

¹⁰Suzanne Pingree, Robert Parker Hawkins, "News Definitions and their effects on women," In Women and the News, ed. Laurily Keir Epstein (New York: Hastings House, 1978), 94.

Suzanne Pingree, Ph.D., Stanford University, is the author of several articles and papers on mass media and socialization. She was Co-Chair of the Committee on the Status of Women for the Association for Education in Journalism.

Robert Parker Hawkins, Ph.D., Stanford University, assistant professor, Mass Communication Research Center, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin - Madison.

minorities are gaining in numbers."¹¹ Although females outnumber males in journalism classrooms nationwide, newspapers continue to hire slightly more males than females.¹² Today, females comprise about 35 percent of the newsroom staff, and although their numbers are increasing, their contributions still do not get the same treatment as males'. ASNE's 1990 study of the front page of 10 major newspapers found a woman's name on 28 percent of the bylines, compared with 27 percent the year before.¹³ The other data collected this year compared to last year's were:

1990

- 14% of sources quoted were female

.....• 32% of photos pictured females¹⁴.....
 pictured

1989

- 11% of sources quoted were female

.....• 24% of photos
 females¹⁵

These data show that women are playing a larger role in the

¹¹Phyllis Messinger, "Women in Management Leads to Lively Discussion at Editors' Meeting," Associated Press, 13 April, 1988.

¹²ASNE, The Changing Face, p. 28.

¹³George Garneau, "ASNE survey: Men dominate the front pages," Editor and Publisher 123 (14 April, 1990): 13

¹⁴ibid.

¹⁵Betty Cuniberti, "Gender gap still wide in news," Los Angeles Times, 12 April, 1989, part V, 1.

categories measured, but they also continue to reveal that males still outnumber women as authors and sources of today's front page news. In an article concerning the 1990 ASNE study, *Miami Herald's* executive editor, Janet Cushmir, said: "We aren't happy with the representation of women in our news pages, bylines or supervisory positions. Frankly, no newspaper in this country should be."¹⁶

Surveys such as ASNE's do not discuss a newspaper's policy of what constitutes a front page news story. Although that is an interesting and somewhat controversial issue in journalism, ASNE's surveys have focused primarily on quantitative data such as bylines and the make up of newspapers' staffs--all data that relate to the issue of gender in the newsroom. This thesis is based on these types of quantitative analyses. According to the research of Jean Gaddy Wilson of the University of Missouri, "women outnumber men in only two places in the media: on the bottom rung of the ladder as beginning reporters and on advertising sales staffs--57%, and ... as support and clerical staffs--94%."¹⁷ ASNE's 1988 study, "The Changing Face of the Newsroom," clearly showed that there is a "concern about too few women ... in top newsroom jobs."¹⁸ Wilson

¹⁶Garneau, ASNE Survey, 13.

¹⁷Women, Men and Media, "The Power Gap," (April, 1989), p. 5.

¹⁸Barbara Henry, "This year we have solid data on what is happening in the Newsroom work force," ASNE Bulletin, (April 1989): 17. (Note: Henry was named publisher of the *Great Falls Tribune* in November 1991.)

conducts the ongoing study, "TAKING STOCK: Women in Media Before the 21st Century." Her national study shows that only 6 percent of newspaper publishers, 7 percent of general managers, and 14 percent of newspaper editors are female. Wilson states that "women lack control over content, policy, money, and direction of their newspapers."¹⁹

Because newspapers today are large business enterprises, the size and makeup of the audience plays an important role. Female readership of daily newspapers has dropped slowly but steadily over the last few years and has dropped 3 percent more than male readership. The Newspaper Advertising Bureau studies show that of the women surveyed in 1981, 67 percent read a newspaper daily, but in 1985 the number had dropped to 62 percent.²⁰ The reasons are probably many. One reason may be that females are underrepresented as gatherers of news and as sources of news, as the ASNE survey shows. Another reason may be that newspapers do not contain news coverage that is of interest to females.

Patricia Rice notes that in 1976 the American Association of University Women found "that there was less news coverage of women

¹⁹Women, Men and Media, "TAKING STOCK: Women in Media Before the 21st century," (April, 1989), p. 5.

²⁰Newspaper Advertising Bureau provided data over the phone (Stu Tolley, Vice President of Sales Research) and mailed the statistical sheets provided in Appendix 1-a and 1-b.

after women's pages were given up."²¹ In an interview, Nancy Woodhull, president of Gannett News Services, stressed that there are good business reasons to provide more news of interest to women:

I also think the needs of the bottom line will encourage industry to be more interested in women. Businesses may find their best customers are women. And that will mean that they need people--men and women--who know how to create products that appeal to more than men.²²

A newspaper's ability to influence changes in society is important. Kay Mills, an editorial writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, said in her book that "papers authenticate change when it shows up in stories on their front pages through bylines of women and blacks as well as white males around the world."²³ She believes that the push for changes within newspapers' structure may help encourage changes in society as a whole. Other media researchers such as Pingree and Hawkins agree with Mills:

Since we wouldn't be focusing on the news media in the first place if we didn't consider them pivotal in social change, we need to find ways to change media coverage in order to hasten the changes we want in society.²⁴

Female equality in the newspaper is also an international

concern. Recently, the Norwegian journalists' organization published the results of a study of female representation in the major newspapers in Norway. In a nation where females comprise 46 percent of the work force, this study found that 14 percent of the articles were "female articles;" 62 percent were "male articles;" and 24 percent were "neutral articles."²⁵ Stockholm, Sweden, is the home of a research group monitoring gender issues in media world wide.²⁶

To summarize, whether viewed internationally, nationally, or locally, gender issues in the newspaper business are important to consider. That is not only because of newspapers' status and influence, but also because newspaper publishers like to believe their papers reflect the communities they serve. A diverse community should therefore be reflected in a diverse newspaper staff. Using content analysis and interviews, this study seeks to establish whether national trends observed for women's roles in newspapers also reflect the situation in three Montana newspapers.

The content analysis used in this study will show to what

extent bylines are attributed to females, sources quoted are female, and women are featured in photos. The analysis will be modeled after the national studies for comparative reasons as the overall goal of this study is to determine whether national trends apply to Montana newspapers.

In addition, a quantitative analysis will examine the male-female proportions of the newspaper staffs with an emphasis on the newsroom staffs. Certain positions in the newsroom have more status than others. It is of particular interest to assess in what areas of the newsroom women work in these Montana newspaper as national studies show that women tend to hold low status positions and are slow in moving up in the newspaper hierarchy.

Most importantly, interviews with journalists at the papers in question seek their perspectives on the issue of women's role in the news, if they believe the issue of gender is/should be of concern, how they experience it, and if they think any changes are needed in relation to gender in the newspaper industry.

The first chapter of this study will give an overview of the national trends of female employment at newspapers and how they may relate to local papers in Montana. Chapter two will establish what methods were used in collecting all data for this study. The following chapter will present the results and related discussion. An overall assessment of the findings, alternative explanations and suggestions for further research will be offered in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 1

National trends and their relations to local papers

Journalists interviewed for this study feel that females are still underrepresented in the newsrooms of Montana's daily newspapers. Their position on gender issues appears to be based on different experiences at their respective newspapers.

Three years ago the female reporters at Missoula, Montana's daily, the *Missoulian*, found it necessary to form a caucus and write what they called a "manifesto" asking that certain "soft" news stories (i.e., child care) be assigned to not just female reporters, declaring that female reporters would decline to cover certain issues and asking for a pay review for one female journalist.¹

Women's issues at the *Great Falls Tribune* took on more prominence when the paper was purchased by Gannett in the spring of

¹ Reporter Mea Andrews of the *Missoulian*, interview March 1991, Missoula, notes.

1990. Gannett is the nation's largest newspaper chain and is recognized as the "industry leader in finding talented women and absorbing their ideas."² (Gannett has similar programs for minorities.) The *Great Falls Tribune's* managing editor said that with Gannett as the new owner, he had available the resources and support to consciously search for job applicants from groups lacking representation in the newsroom. His newspaper established a policy calling for at least one female and one minority applicant as finalists for any newsroom hiring.³ When this paper was written in July, the *Great Falls Tribune* was seeking to hire a female assistant managing editor.

In contrast, the only female editor at the *Helena Independent Record* feels that her chances for advancement are limited because the male editors are not close to retirement and not eager to move on.⁴ She also believes this is one reason why highly qualified female and male journalists at the paper leave to seek career advancements other places.⁵

Based on those stories, it appears some Montana journalists feel that females are still treated differently in the

² Mills, Place in the News, 300.

³ Managing Editor Gary Hoseman of the *Great Falls Tribune* interview by author, 31 May 1991, Great Falls, notes and tape.

⁴ Night Editor Cindy King of the *Helena Independent Record* interview by author, 13 July 1991, Helena, notes and tape recording.

⁵ Ibid.

newsrooms than are their male counterparts. National studies in the late '80s discussed the possibilities of a "pink collar ghetto" at newspapers as female journalists were expected to rapidly increase in numbers and become the majority in newsrooms nationwide. This would create a "ghetto" of female reporters and limit their opportunities for advancement. However, that trend has not yet materialized. Recent national studies of daily newspapers show that although there has been an increase of female journalists, they still make up only 35 percent of the newsroom staffs.⁶

The ongoing study "TAKING STOCK: Women in the Media Before the 21st Century," was presented at the Women, Men and Media conference at the University of Southern California in 1989. That study showed that the Mountain Region, including Montana, is one of the better places for women in the media to work.⁷ In this region, females make up 39 percent of newspaper staffs.⁸ This is partly explained by the observation that "the smaller the newspaper, the higher percentage of women employed."⁹

The papers included in this thesis, *Great Falls Tribune*, *Helena Independent Record*, and *Missoulian*, are all in the 10,000 to 50,000 circulation range. The analysis will attempt to determine

⁶ ASNE, The Changing Face, 27

⁷ Women, Men and Media. (April 1989).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

the percentage of females holding jobs at these three newspapers, with an emphasis on the newsroom staff, to see if the papers are following the regional trend of having about 39 percent female staff members. It will also discuss why or why not national trends apply to the newspapers in question.

Also, because this region has a relatively large number of small newspapers, the organizations tend to have more entry-level reporters who are trying to "get their start in the business."¹⁰ It appears that few jobs, including entry-level jobs, come open at Montana newspapers because journalists take the jobs at those papers and stay--often females stay in reporter jobs and males stay in management positions. However, if we accept Wilson's assertion that women outnumber men at the entry level, then this study might be expected to reveal a higher proportion of female than male entry-level reporters at the Montana newspapers. It is important to note that there may be other reasons related to expected findings. For instance, women tend to follow their husbands and find jobs where available, or the goal is not necessarily to move up and out of state. However, a closer examination of these possibilities are beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, national trends show that females in the newsroom tend to work as reporters and copy editors.¹¹ The analysis will address these questions by focusing on the male/female ratio

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ ASNE, Changing Face, 19.

and in what area of the newspaper females work.

Research into who and what makes a news source shows that "women are more likely to be selected as news makers on the local than on the national and international scenes."¹² This finding is usually explained by the observation that women more often tend to hold positions of authority in smaller communities and local organizations than in larger national and international organizations.¹³ As an example, Missoula County's three commissioners currently are female; Great Falls's mayor is female, a Lewis and Clark county commissioner and a Helena city commissioner are female, and there are numerous female state officials stationed in Helena. At the same time, Montana's governor, two U.S. senators, and two U.S. House representatives are all male. The content analysis will indicate whether women appear as news makers more frequently in local newspapers than what studies show for national papers.

¹² Gertrude Joch Robinson, "Women, Media Access in Women and the News, ed. Laurily Keir Epstein (New York: Hastings 1978), 64.

¹³ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

The data for this study was collected using three major methods: quantitative analysis, content analysis, and interviews. The methods are similar in form to comparable studies conducted by ASNE and Communications Consortium, a Washington-based media consultant firm.

A. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Quantitative measures were used to describe the patterns of employment at each newspaper. The management at each paper provided a personnel directory or staff roster that listed employees in all the departments. When in doubt about the gender of an employee, the personnel office provided the correct identification. The rosters were complete and accurate for the time period of interest.

The variables of interest in the quantitative analysis were:

- a. What proportion of the newspaper employees are women?
- b. Where in the newspaper do females work?
- c. What proportion of the newspaper management in general is female?
- d. What proportion of the newsroom management is female?

The benefit of quantitative analysis was that it clearly showed the mix of male and female employees by departments. It also allowed me to measure where in the organizational hierarchy females were found, and whether females have reached mid-management positions at these papers.

The kind of information available for this study may represent weak points in the quantitative analysis, however. For instance, the analysis relied on the personnel directories to estimate where in the newspaper organization a particular individual worked. These directories do not reveal how long the employees have worked at the paper. That information would have been useful although it was not a focus of the study. It would have helped to address the explanation frequently given by newsroom employees for why there were few female editors. Many believed there were few because most women did not have enough experience. Without a direct measure of longevity it was difficult to test this hypothesis.

B. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Historically, content analysis is the most frequently used method of newspaper analysis.¹ In this study, content analysis is defined as an "analysis of written ... communications by examining the frequency with which selected words or themes are used."² Elsewhere content analysis has been "used to study the causes of the communication, ... and the effects of the communication on audiences."³

While the selection of papers for analysis was based on newspaper circulation numbers, in two cases additional factors such as the type of community the paper serves or the "reputation" of the paper was taken into consideration. For example, the *Missoulian* is the third largest newspaper in Montana and serves a liberal college community, and the *Great Falls Tribune* is the second largest paper and carries a reputation as the state's "high quality" newspaper. This study included the *Helena Independent Record* because in a study assessing women's role in local media, it was important to include the state capital's paper.

The objects of the content analysis were the front pages and section fronts of the daily editions over a one-month period.

¹ Krippendorff, Klaus, Content Analysis, An Introduction to Methodology, (London, Sage Publications, 1980), p. 13.

² White, Louise G., Political Analysis, Technique and Practice, (Brook/Cole Publishing Comp., California, 1990), p. 241.

³ Ibid. p. 242.

which is about the same length of time used in other national studies. March 1991 was the month selected for analysis. March is the month used by the national studies. In addition, the study chose March of this year in order to have the date represent a time frame close to the period during which interviews were conducted.

The front pages were chosen because in general they display the most important news of the day and because most reporters strive to have their stories placed as front page news. Again, the national studies that this analysis is modeled after used stories from the front pages. However, this local study was expanded to include section fronts that present local and state news and sports--areas that are important to study because editors at the three newspapers of study focus on these news areas. The section fronts were coded according to their heading, i.e. "Montana/Metro," "Sports," etc. This provided an element of consistency to the content analysis.⁴ Section fronts such as business, lifestyle, food, and so forth, occur on a weekly or up to monthly basis, and data for those were recorded, but not included in the result due to the small sample.⁵

This study used the "frequency analysis" method of content analysis. Frequency analysis is "the simple recording of

⁴ For example, labels such as "Section B" or "Section C" vary in whether they designated local news or sports in the daily. If I had used this system it would have resulted in comparing, for example, across departments.

⁵ Data available in Appendix 2.

the frequency with which certain words, phrases, or themes appear in a given communication."⁶ The materials were analyzed according to the following specific categories based on national studies:

- a. To what extent are bylines attributed to females?
- b. To what extent are sources female?
- c. To what extent are females featured in photos?

When counting references to men and women as sources in articles, only proper names were tabulated--pronouns were not. Where the sex of the source could not be identified based on names, i.e. "Pat Hanson," it was not counted in either category. This did not occur frequently. Technically, this could have occurred when tabulating bylines except the analysis was aided by the newsrooms' staff rosters where the gender of the reporters was identified.

A strength of the content analysis is that it is modeled after national studies that have been conducted for several years and are positively regarded by the news industry. This gives a good basis for the comparison of local and national trends. One weak point is the difficulty in determining the gender of some wire service reporters. Another weakness lies in the section fronts that appear to be published on a random rotation. Because this study looked at only a one-month period, the statistical reliability of the data gathered for these sections is suspect.

⁶ Ibid.

C. INTERVIEWS

This final part of the study is best described as "qualitative field research" conducted through partly structured and open-ended interviews. The first part of each interview involved seven standard questions posed to all interview subjects:

1. National statistics suggest that 14% of sources quoted in newspaper stories are female and 28% of the bylines are female. What is your reaction to these kinds of statistics?
2. What issues/beats do you think are emphasized at your newspaper?
3. What issues/news do you consider to be typically men's issues or women's issues? Do you believe such a distinction exists?
4. How well do you feel that your newspaper covers those respective issues?
5. How much influence do you feel the women in your newroom have in the decisions of what goes into the paper and where?
6. How do you consider your opportunities for advancement?
7. Several newspaper organizations have a policy of "affirmative action for women and minorities." How do you feel about a corporate push for increased diversity in the newroom?

Questions 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7 were chosen because of their relevance to the topic of gender in the news industry. Questions 2, 3, and 4 were included to provide a perspective of how the professional journalists viewed the needs of their constituency--the

readers.

The second part of the interview was a series of open-ended questions asking about personal experiences in the newsroom related to gender. At this point, each interview took a different course depending upon the individual and his/her experience, but these questions were used frequently:

1. Have you ever felt discriminated against based on your gender?
2. Why do you think there are so few females in newsroom management?
3. What are your suggested remedies to increase female ratio in management in particular?

The interview subjects were selected based on the position they held at the paper. Included were interviews of about four staff members from the newsroom at each paper--at least one male and one female reporter, and one male and one female editor. The interviews were usually conducted in a conference room at the newspapers. Only on three occasions did the interviews take place outside the newspaper. In recording the responses, tapes and notes were used. The length of the interviews varied from 30 minutes up to one hour.

The strong points in the interviews are the personal perspectives and experiences offered by the subjects. Their experiences as journalists ranged from a few months up to two decades. The standard questions provided a basis for comparing the experiences of Montana newspaper journalists. Most important,

however, these personal interviews add a human dimension to the data gathered through the content and quantitative analyses.

Individually, all three research methods are important. When used together, they complement each other and provide a more complete picture.

From the interviewer's position, some of the journalists and editors clearly felt uncomfortable both talking about the subject of gender, and about being on the answering side of questions. These factors may have influenced how much the interview subjects were willing to elaborate on the issues asked about or how honest they were in the answers. However, the extent of that would be difficult to assess.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

A. Great Falls Tribune.

This Gannett-owned daily newspaper employed 112 full-time employees (the numbers in this analysis are based on FTE's only) at the time of the study. Eighty of these employees were classified in the top four categories of employment in terms of pay and power. These positions included managers/editors, reporters, technical staff/specialists and sales--jobs that were particularly interesting for this study. Thirty-three of the upper classified employees (41.3 percent) were women. That proportion is about 2 percent above the average percentage of females employed at newspapers in this region. Typically, females were found in the low profile departments of the paper, such as classified and circulation. The analysis of females in the five largest departments

showed:

- Accounting: 78% (9 total/7 women)
- Advertising (display and classified): 55% (20 total/11 women)
- Circulation: 36% (11 total/4 women)
- Production: 0% (10 total/0 women)
- Newsroom: 30% (including librarian and newsclerk/info. who were both females) (33 total/10 women)

Females tend to dominate advertisement departments and therefore more frequently reach management levels in those departments.¹ A woman headed the advertising department at the *Tribune* and the controller was female while the other five departments had male managers. The distribution of males and females in the *Tribune's* top management was 71 percent and 29 percent respectively, which is the same as found for the *Helena Independent Record*.

The newsroom was the largest department in terms of number of employees. A male managing editor headed the department and was supported by six male editors and one female. This again supports the nationally recognized trend of a lack of females in newsroom management positions, and further suggests that the term "glass ceiling" is not just a theory, but an actuality in local newsrooms.

Females comprised 27 percent of the *Tribune* reporters. This was nearly half of what the national studies show for distribution of

¹Women, men and media, "Taking Stock," p. 31.

gender among reporters. Also, included in that percentage were three females who divided their jobs between the copy desk and feature writing. That meant even fewer female reporters covered front page news or local news. Managing editor Gary Moseman said he has experienced a lack of female applicants for job openings at the paper.² In American journalism schools, 60 percent of the students are female and statistics show that 52 percent of graduated print journalism students at the University of Montana's School of Journalism over the last five years are female.³ This suggests that female journalism students are applying elsewhere for employment. One possibility may be that larger newspapers have recruited females more actively and made it easier for females to get jobs out of states. Also, Charles Hood, dean of UM's School of Journalism, has observed among students at his school that more females tend to seek employment in related fields like public relations or advertising.⁴

B. Helena Independent Record.

According to its March personnel directory, the *Helena Independent Record* employed 60 full time persons out of which 22 (36.7

²Managing Editor Gary Moseman, *Great Falls Tribune*, interview by author, 31 May, 1991, Great Falls, taperecording and notes, Missoula, Montana.

³University of Montana School of Journalism, statistical record of graduating students.

⁴Dean Charles Hood, University of Montana's School of Journalism, interview over the phone by author, 12 December 1992, notes, Missoula, Montana.

percent) were females--almost 2 percent less than the average percentage of female employees calculated by national studies for newspapers in the Mountain Region. The difference is relatively insignificant and suggests that the *Independent Record* follows national trends.

The analysis of where in the newspaper females work showed that females comprised large proportions of the staff in the "support" departments of the paper:

- Accounting: 80% (5 total/4 women)
- Advertising (display and classified): 46% (11 total/5 women)
- Classified advertisement: 75% (4 total/3 women)
- Circulation: 40% (5 total/2 women)
- Production: 58% (12 total/7 women)
- Newsroom: 28% (including librarian and newsclerk who were both females) (18 total/5 women)

Females dominated the accounting and classified departments, which also was congruent with the findings of national studies.

National trends also show that females tend to be managers of these same "support" departments. The employment pattern at the *Independent Record* supported this to a certain degree as the controller (business manager) and personnel manager were both female. However, males headed the other six departments at the paper, leaving the female portion of top-level management at 28%.

The newsroom was headed by a male managing editor who was supported by 4 editors in what is usually designated as the mid-management of the newspaper. Only one female joined that group; this supports the

idea that it is still difficult for females to reach editor positions.

Although national trends show females tend to outnumber males at the entry-level reporting level, this did not hold true for the *Independent Record* as two out of five reporters (40 percent) in the newsroom were female. One of the male reporters served as the education reporter as well as the arts editor responsible for the weekly "Your Time" supplement. However, he was regarded as an entry-level reporter and not as management due to the fact that he was hired within the last year and this was his first professional journalism job. The two beginning female reporters at the paper were hired eight and four months before this study took place. Nine months earlier the newsroom had no female reporters.

C. Missoulian.

At the time of this study, the *Missoulian* had 103 full-time employees. Forty-seven of those employees (46 percent) were women. This implied that the *Missoulian* employed a significantly higher percentage (almost six percent) of females than what the national trends suggest for daily newspapers in this region.

However, similar to the other two papers in this study, the *Missoulian* had a relatively large proportion of females in the advertising and accounting departments:

- Accounting: 71% (7 total/5 women)
- Advertising (display and classified): 70% (20 total/14 women)
- Circulation: 44% (9 total/4 women)

- Production: 37% (30 total/11 women)
- Newsroom: 36% (including librarian and newsclerk/info. who were both females) (30 total/11 women)

Of these five departments, a female was the top manager/director of one. Males headed the other four departments. The distribution of males and females in the top management of departments was 80 percent and 20 percent respectively. The publisher and head of the administration, a male, is not included.

As with the *Great Falls Tribune* and *Helena Independent Record*, the *Missoulian* newsroom employs the largest number of people of any of the five departments surveyed for this study. The managing editor was male as were six out of the seven editors in the newsroom. In addition, four out of six assistant editors were male. Again, this supports the analysis of the two other papers in this study, and the national trend that females are underrepresented in newspaper management and consequently, the decision-making process.

Five out of 14 *Missoulian* reporters (36%) were females, which is above the proportion of female reporters found at both the *Tribune* and *Independent Record*. The content analysis will examine whether this larger proportion of female reporters was reflected in more female bylines on the front page of the *Missoulian*. At this paper, female reporters covered the environmental beat and higher education beat, which appeared to receive considerable front page coverage.

2. CONTENT ANALYSIS

A. Great Falls Tribune.

The *Great Falls Tribune* has a circulation of about 33,000.⁵ It predominately serves the community of Great Falls, but also taps into the markets of nearby cities--including Helena. The paper was bought by Gannett last year.

The analysis of the paper's front pages during March, 1991, revealed that male reporters dominated the bylines--94 percent of the stories were written by males, while females wrote only 6 percent. See fig. 3-1. That meant only four out of 31 issues of the newspaper displayed stories on the front page that were written by women. The preponderance of stories written by males may be explained by the news at the time. During this month, the war in the Gulf dominated all news⁶, while the Montana legislative session was the subject of a large proportion of the state news coverage. The national media watch group, FAIR--Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting--devoted an issue of its newsletter to women in the media and featured an article on how male reporters and male news sources dominated the war news.⁷ However, this observation does not alone explain why articles written by males were so common. One

⁵Editor and Publisher Yearbook, 1991, p. 1-193.

⁶For reasons why study took place in Marc, refer to p. 18, methodology. In addition, there is usually something (events) dominating the news at any given time.

⁷Susan J. Douglas, "The Representation of Women in the News Media," Extra! March/April 1991, 2. Extra! is the newsletter of the national media watch group FAIR.

question does arise: why were there so few female journalists covering the war? Kay Mills offers one possible answer in an article for the *Columbia Journalism Review*: "... some male editors still assume they should not send a woman on a dangerous assignment, especially overseas."⁸ Because so few top editors are female, she argues that few females are involved in deciding who should be assigned to cover the major events.⁹

The male/female ratio of the staff reporters naturally influences the proportion of bylines by gender. The *Great Falls Tribune* had only six female reporters during this particular time period, four of whom covered feature stories and not breaking news. The small proportion of female reporters obviously had a great effect on the lack of front page bylines attributed to females.

A similar disproportion of males to females was found in the sources used in the articles. Nearly 85 percent of those quoted were male, while females were used as sources in only 15 percent of the front page articles. The portrayal of males and females in photos on the front page followed the same pattern. Photos included females about 22 percent of the time and males 88 percent. See Fig. 3-2, and 3-3.

Just as males dominated the front page, they prevail on the section fronts for local/Montana news. Out of 123 attributed bylines, only eight bore a female reporter's name. The numbers were not quite as disproportionate for the sources used in these articles, but males still

⁸Kay Mills, "Memo: To Good Old Boys and '90s women," *Columbia Journalism Review*, January/February 1990, 48,49.

⁹ibid.

outnumbered females. Twenty-three percent of the sources were female, while 77 percent were male. The percentage of female sources for state/local news was almost 10 percent above the national average and does substantiate Robinson's claim "that women are more likely to be selected as news makers on the local level."¹⁰

The photos used for this section followed a similar trend. Females were included in 36 percent of the photos on this section front and males were pictured in 64 percent of the photographs. It should be noted that only photos with people were included in these data. See fig. 3-4, 3-5, and 3-6.

¹⁰Robinson, "Women, Media Access," p, 94

Fig. 3-1. Great Falls Tribune. Front page-bylines.

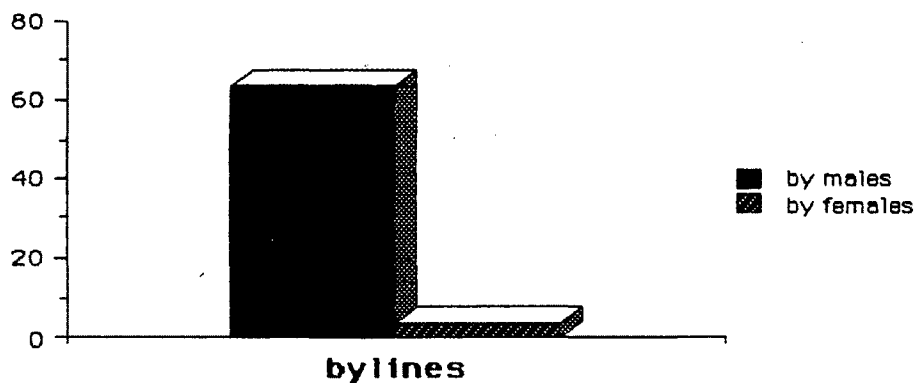


Figure 3-2. Great Falls Tribune. Front page - sources.

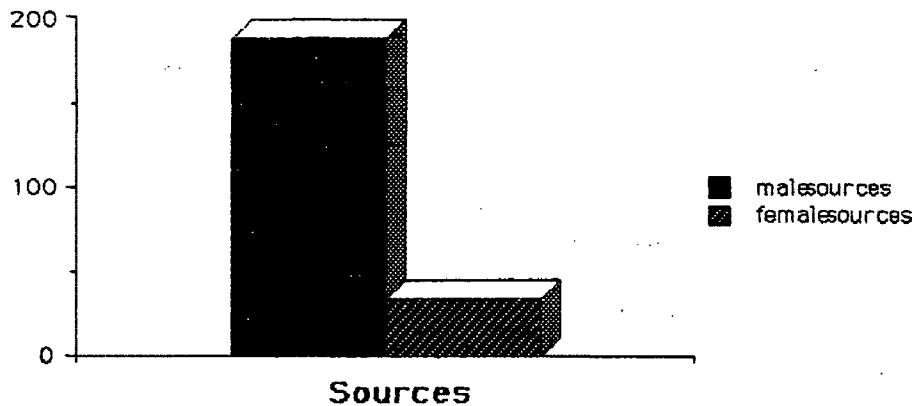


Figure 3-3. Great Falls Tribune. Front page - photos.

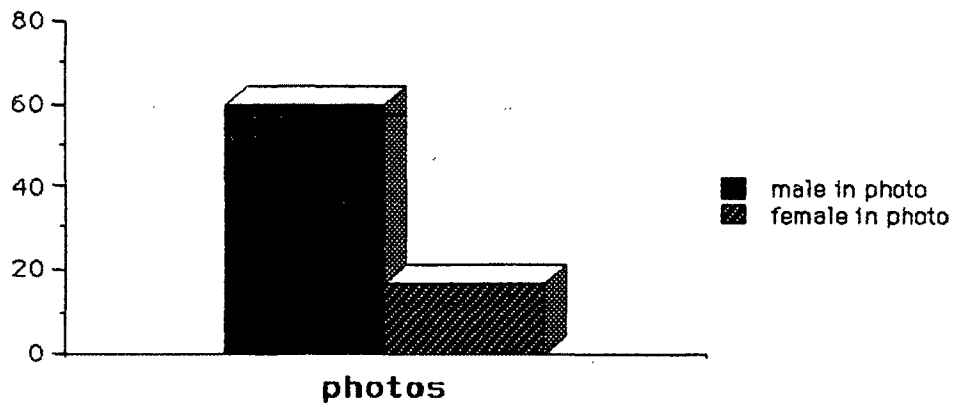


Figure 3-4. Great Falls Tribune. Local news - bylines.

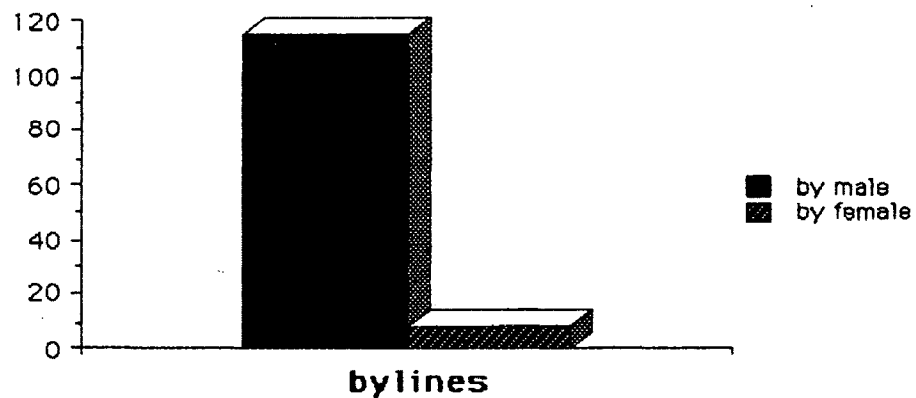


Figure 3-5. Great Falls Tribune. Local news -sources.

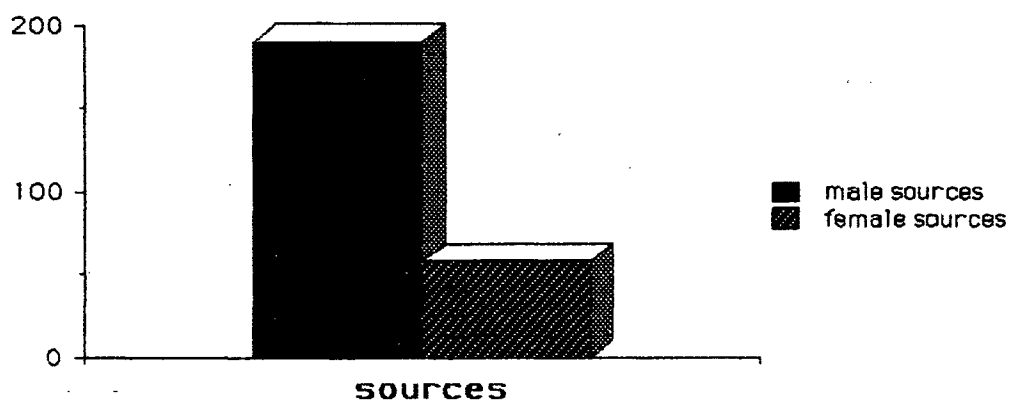
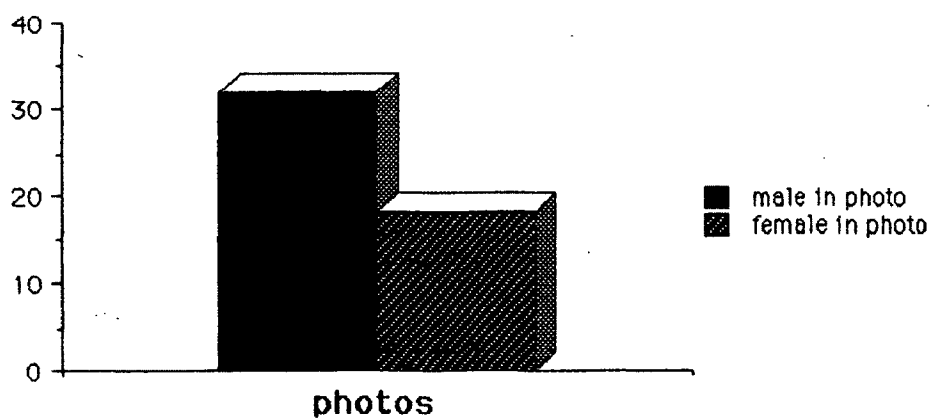


Figure 3-6. Great Falls Tribune. Local news - photos.



The world of sports coverage has proven the most difficult for female journalists to break into on the national level, and it appears to be true for local newspapers as well. "Sports is still a man's world," Linda Caricaburu, special projects editor at the *Great Falls Tribune*, said.

In terms of this analysis, Caricaburu's statement could not be more correct. Males overwhelmingly outnumbered females in every category examined for the sports section. Ninety-nine percent of the bylines attributed carried a male name. During the time period of this study, only one story written by a female appeared on the sports section, and that occurred on an Associated Press story. There were no female sports writers on staff at the paper at this time.

Similarly, 91 percent of the sources quoted were male, indicating that the sports section predominately covers men's sports. Nearly nine percent of the sources were female, and 13 percent of the photos included females. See Fig. 3-7, 3-8, and 3-9.

Figure 3-7. Great Falls Tribune. Sports - bylines.

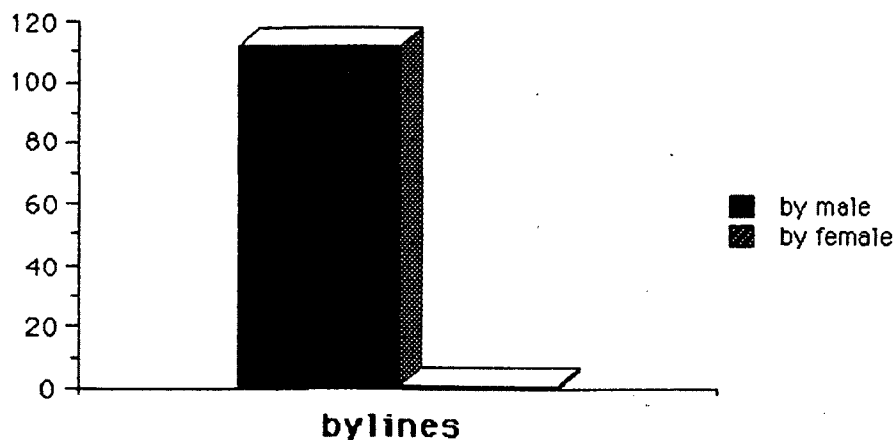


Figure 3-8. Great Falls Tribune. Sports - sources.

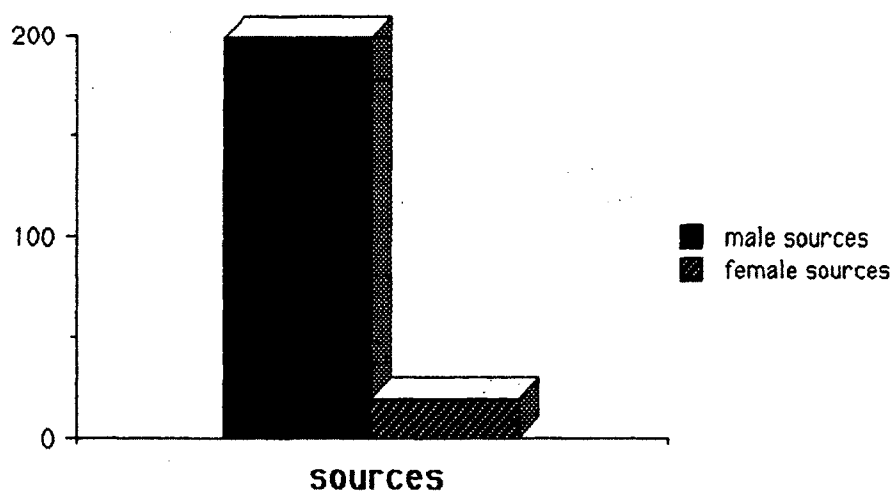
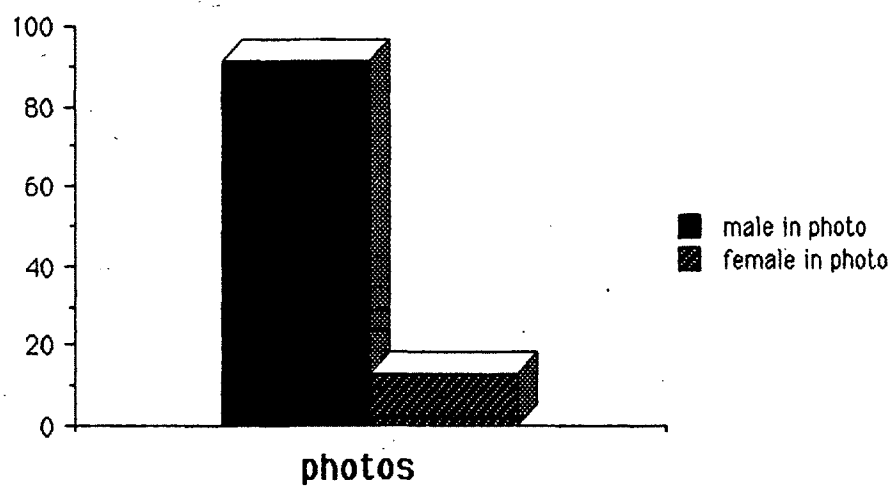


Figure 3-9. Great Falls Tribune. Sports - photos.



B. Helena Independent Record

The *Helena Independent Record*, owned by Lee Enterprises Inc., is the smallest paper included in this sample. The paper's circulation is about 12,500. Naturally, the paper's size is reflected in the size of its staff, and the newsroom had lost a reporter position shortly before this study took place.

The pattern of male predominance established in the analysis of the *Tribune* is also present at this paper. Of the bylines on the front pages during March, 86 percent were those of males. Stories written by females made up 14 percent. These data are almost identical to the findings in national studies.

The number of females used as sources was above the national average for the front page, which usually displayed a mixture of national and local news stories. About 23 percent of the sources were female and 77 percent were male.

Although the proportion of males used in front page photos was large, the proportion of females included in photos had improved comparatively. Here, one third of the photos included females while about 66 percent featured males. In one sense, this corresponded with the trend for the use of sources. If the sources of news are predominately male then it is logical that the photos used to accentuate the articles picture males since the sources are those usually depicted in the photos. See Fig. 3-10, 3-11, and 3-12.

Editors at the *Independent Record* said they tried to emphasize local news in their coverage in order to appeal to the local audience. The "Helena" section featured 67 percent stories written

Figure 3-10. Helena Independent Record. Front page.

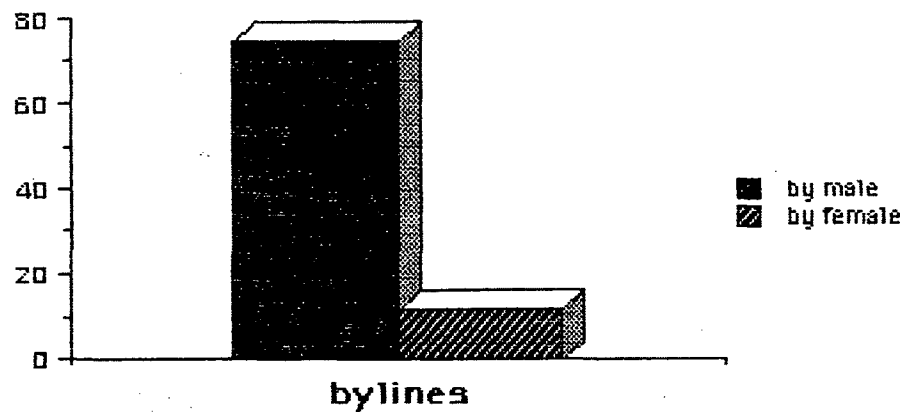


Figure 3-11. Helena Independent Record. Front page.

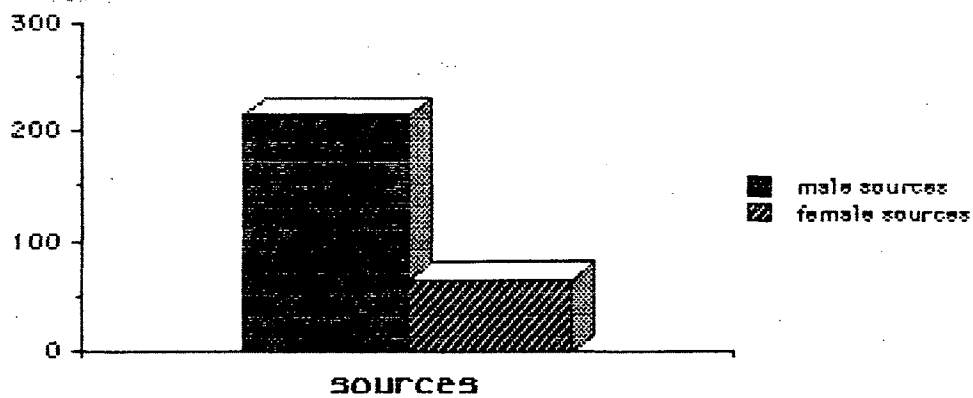
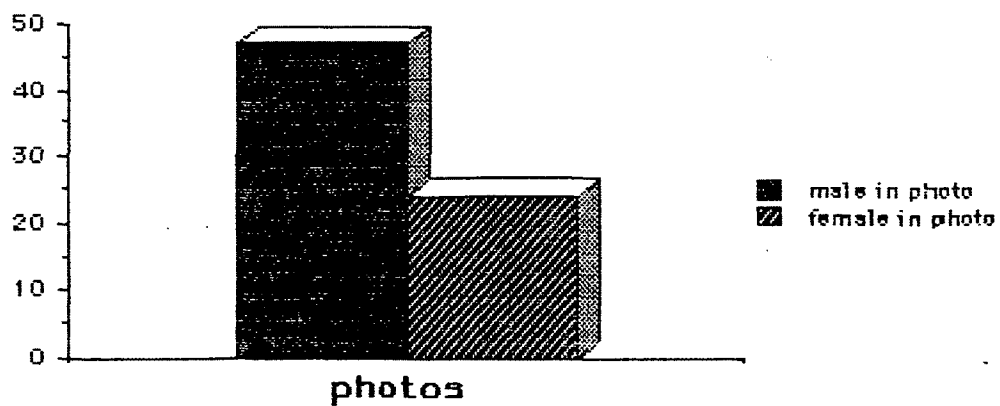


Figure 3-12. Helena Independent Record. Front page.



by males and 33 percent stories written by females. Again, while this is above the national trends, there is still a clear male majority. The gender distribution of sources for articles on this section front is below national trends as 12 percent of sources used were female and 88 percent of the sources were male.

Females were pictured in 40 percent of the photos--only four percent more than found in the *Great Falls Tribune*. The Helena section did not include photos every day, which may have influenced these findings. See figures 3-13, 3-14, and 3-15.

The *Helena Independent Record's* sports section strengthened the observed emphasis on males' in the news. Stories written by females only occurred in 7 percent of the attributed sports stories. It is interesting to note that while the general news staff consisted of five reporters, the sports department had two full-time reporters who were male. Additionally, this meant that any of the articles written by females in the sports section probably came from the AP. It was not surprising that the use of sources exhibited the same pattern of gender distribution as the bylines. Twelve percent of the sources in sports stories were females. It is important to note that during March both the University of Montana's and Montana State University's men and women basketball teams were playing in the Big Sky Conference championship tournaments and both UM teams made the NCAA tournament. While this was news that made papers statewide, it appeared the focus was on the men's team. Also, in terms of the use of sources, it should be noted that the Lady Griz coach is male, so many of the articles covered a female sport, but used a male source. See figures 3-16, 3-17, and 3-18.

Figure 3-13. Helena Independent Record. Local news.

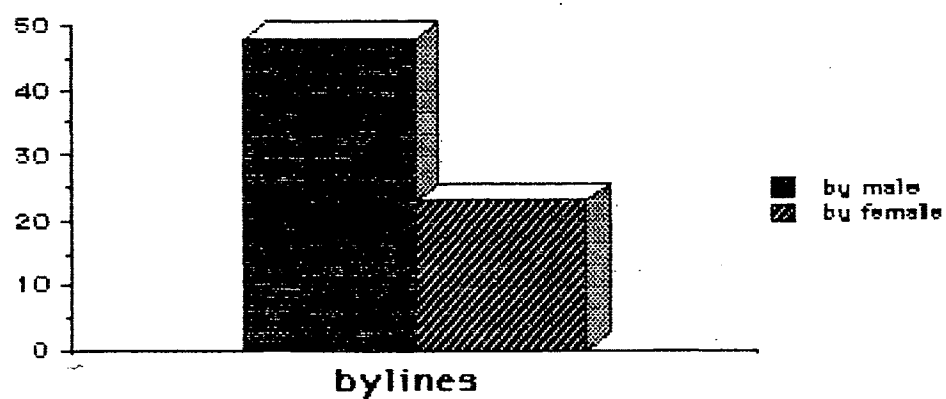


Figure 3-14. Helena Independent Record. Local news.

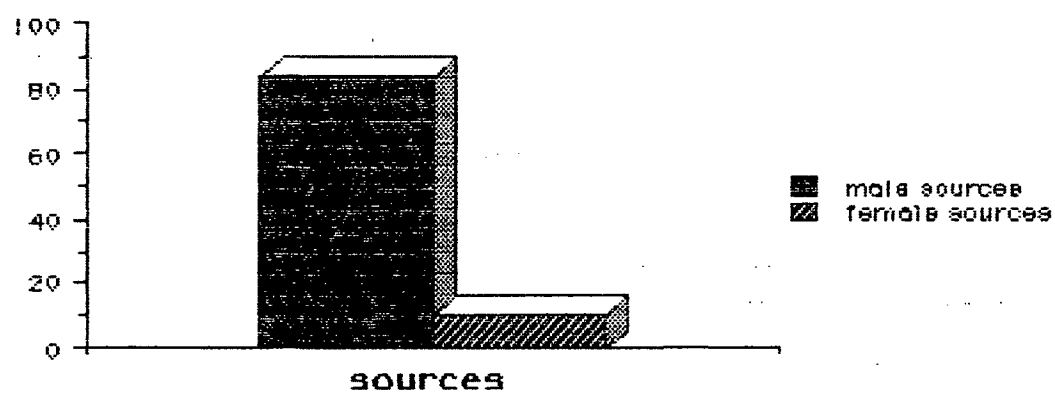


Figure 3-15. Helena Independent Record. Local news.

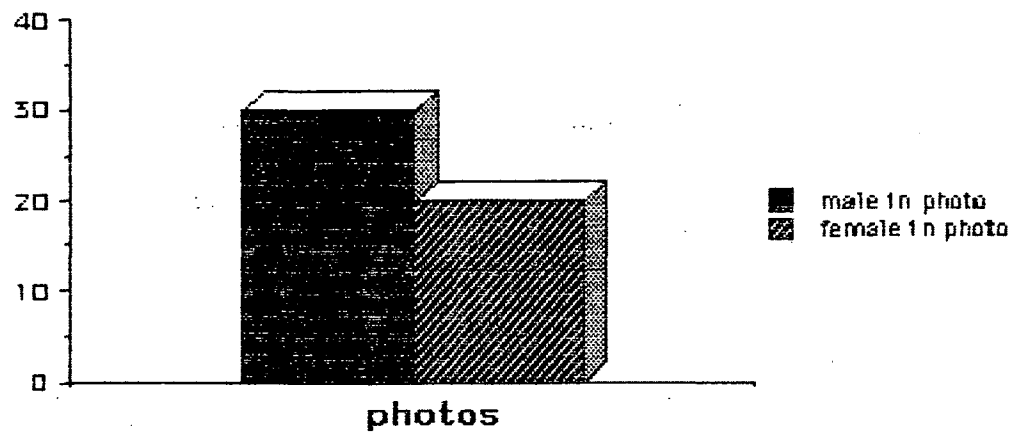


Figure 3-16. Helena Independent Record. Sports.

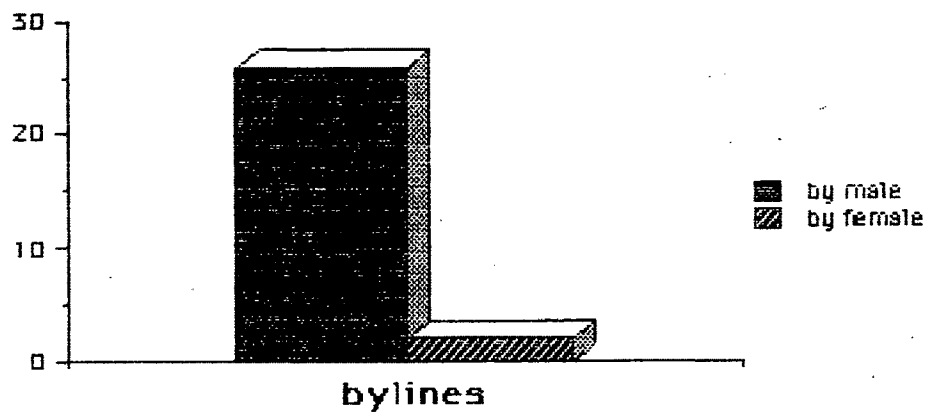


Figure 3-17. Helena Independent Record. Sports.

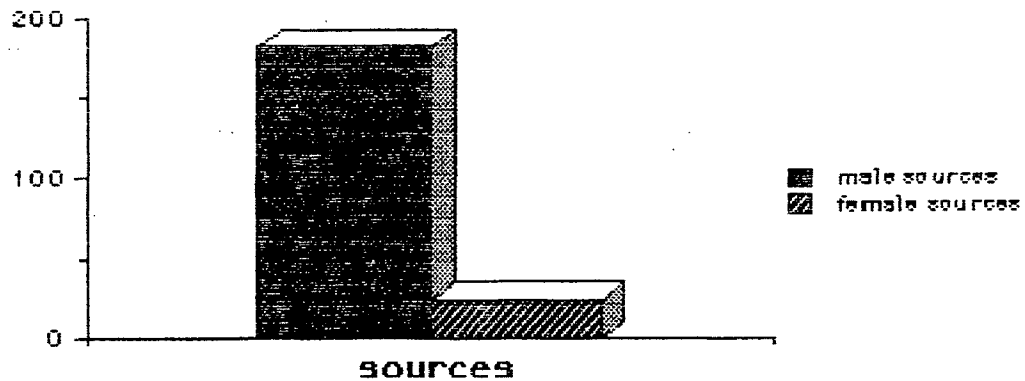
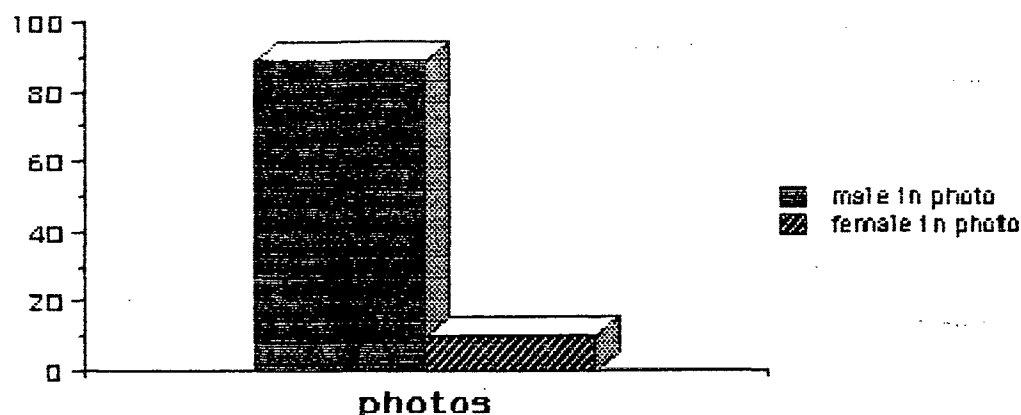


Figure 3-18. Helena Independent Record. Sports.



3. Missoulian

The front page of the *Missoulian* featured more stories written by females than any other paper in this study. Thirty-nine percent of the articles attributed were written by females--the national average stands at 14 percent ¹¹. The larger proportion of female staff members in the *Missoulian* newsroom (36 percent) compared to the two other newspapers (28 percent in the *Helena Independent Record* newsroom and 30 percent in the *Great Falls Tribune* newsroom) may explain this relatively large percentage of stories attributed to female journalists. In addition, news covering environmental and educational issues seems to be emphasized at the paper. Both these beats were covered by female reporters during the time period of the analysis. See figure 3-19.

A higher percentage of stories written by females was not reflected in a similar increase of female sources used in the stories. Therefore, it did not appear that female reporters sought out female

¹¹George Garneau, "ASNE Survey: Men dominate the front pages," Editor and Publisher, 13.

sources to any larger degree than their male counterparts. Seventeen percent of the sources quoted in front page stories were female. See figure 3-20.

Females were included in 31 percent of the photos. See figure 3-21.

There was one byline attributed to a female reporter for every three attributed to a male reporter on the section front covering Montana/Metro news. The 25 percent of stories written by females was

Figure 3-19. Missoulian. Front page - bylines.

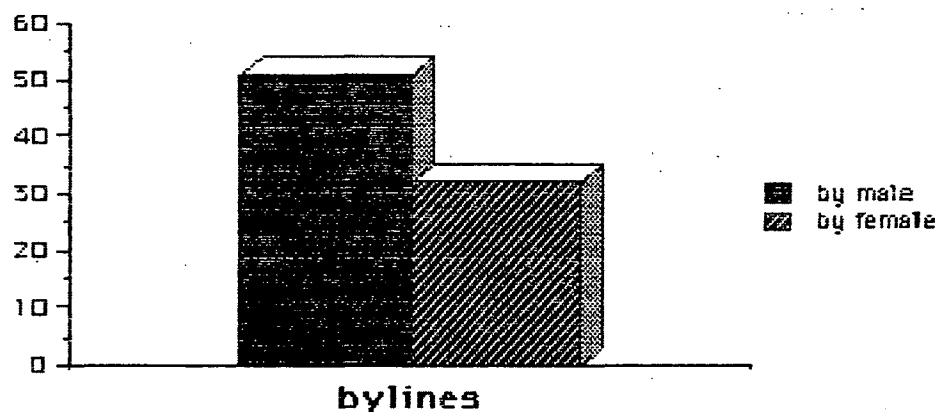


Figure 3-20. Missoulian. Front page - sources.

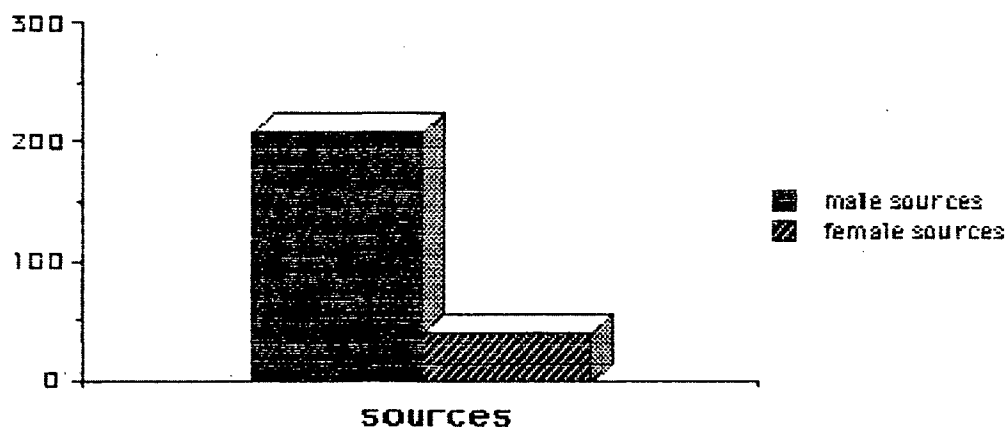
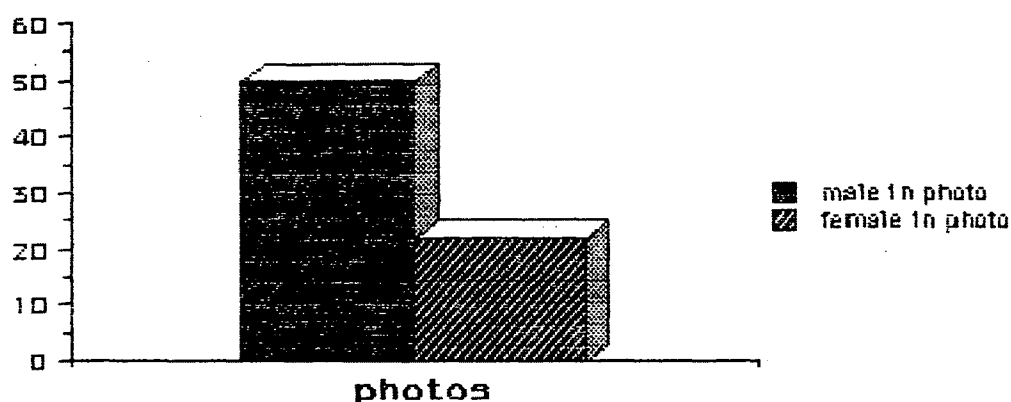


Figure 3-21. Missoulian. Front page - photos.



close to the national average of 28 percent¹² - much higher than that calculated for the *Great Falls Tribune* (7 percent) and somewhat below that calculated for the *Helena Independent Record* (33 percent). These differences can be attributed, in the main, to the fact that a female reporter covers the local and county government news for the *Independent Record* and no female reporters are assigned to a similar beat for the *Great Falls Tribune*. See figure 3-22.

Once again, males outnumbered females as sources in news stories by a relatively large margin. However, in this case, the figure was above the national average of 14 percent female sources. Eighteen percent of the sources cited in the section front covering Montana/Metro news were female while 82 percent of the sources consulted were male. Females were included in 24 percent of the photos used for this section front. See figures 3-23 and 3-24.

If stories written by males comprised the clear majority of the other papers' sports, they dominated the Missoulian's sports section

¹²ibid.

with 100 percent of the bylines. Not one of the 31 editions featured a story written by a female on the section front. Again, females were cited in only 12 percent of the stories, and just 14 percent of the photos included women. See figures 3-25, 3-26 and 3-27.

Figure 3-22. Missoulian. Local news - bylines.

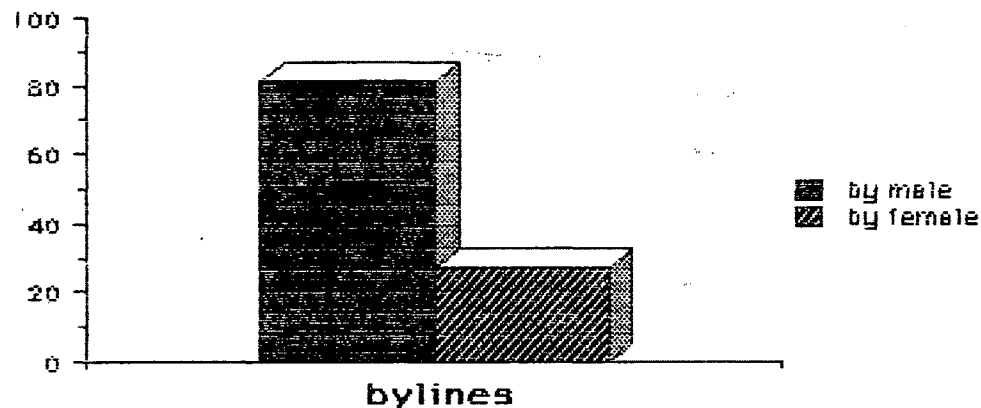


Figure 3-23. Missoulian. Local news - sources.

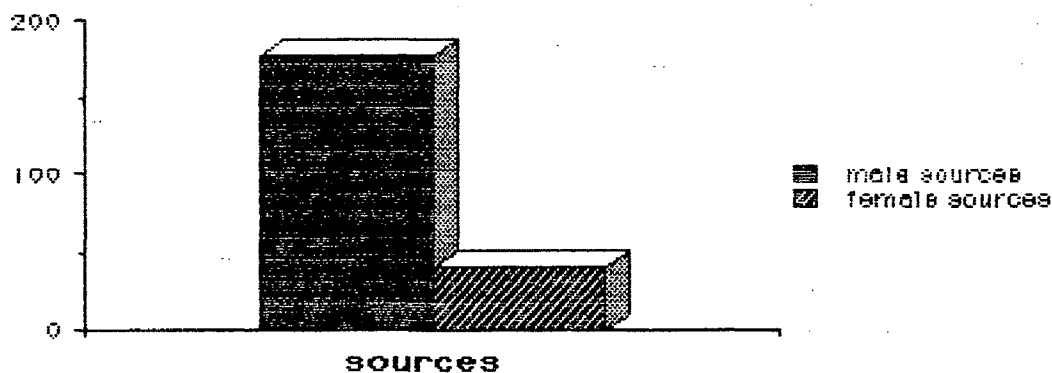


Figure 3-24. Missoulian. Local news - photos.

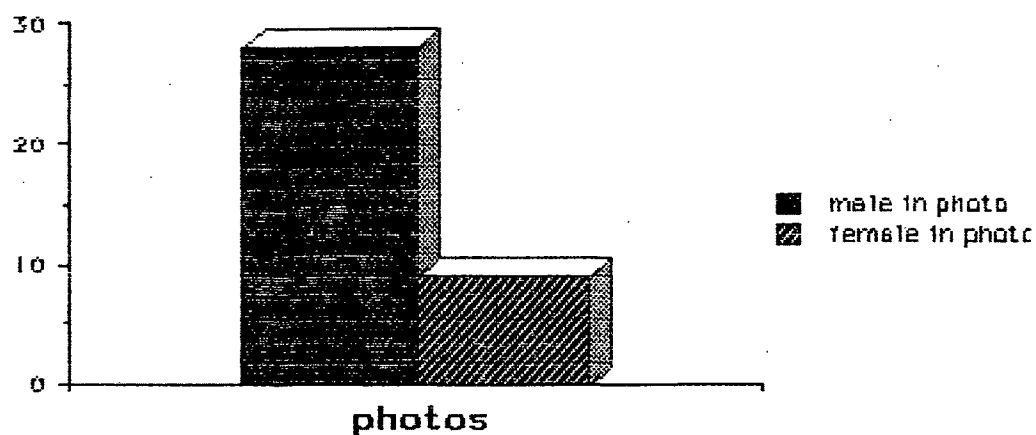


Figure 3-25. Missoulian. Sports - bylines.

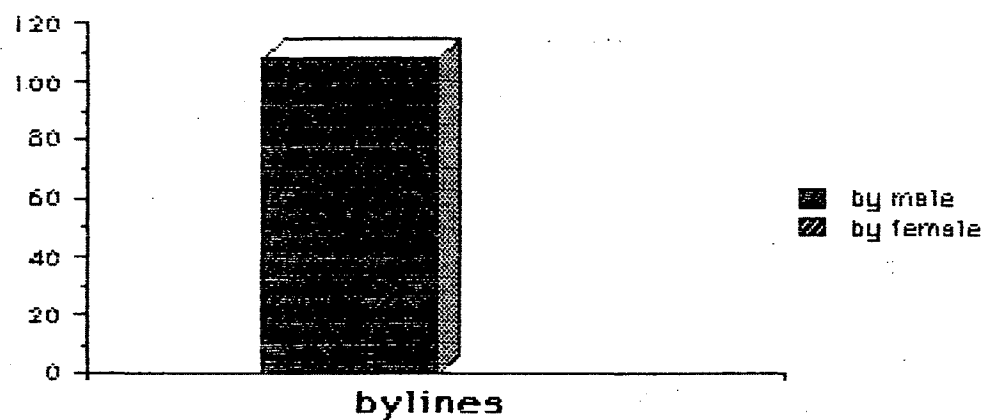
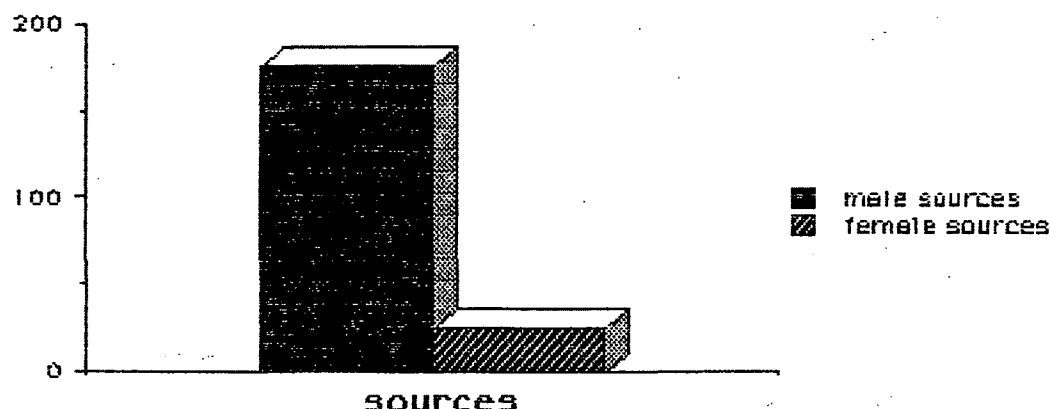
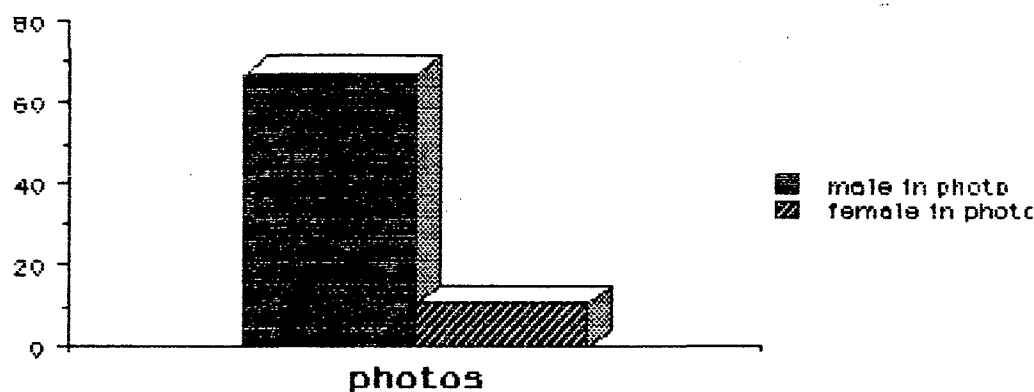


Figure 3-26. Missoulian. Sports - sources.Figure 3-27. Missoulian. Sports - photos.

3. INTERVIEWS.

In general, Montana reporters were not surprised to hear that males dominate the categories examined for the newspapers in this study. However, there were several opinions as to why the preponderance of males in and behind the news persists, and how it makes itself evident in newspaper coverage.

It seems to be generally agreed that there is "a link between what is covered and who assigns the coverage, between what is covered and who

does the coverage."¹³ However, to use that as a possible explanation for the gender differences this study found is not clear cut. For instance, no one seemed to think there really is any division between men's and women's issues, but neither did they think papers do a good job of covering what women are interested in. Most journalists at these Montana papers think of issues in terms of people and take into account overall news judgment. (However, a discussion of what constitutes "news" was not within the scope of this study.)

The female journalists believe they have a lot of influence over what stories they get to cover, as reporters at small local newspapers enjoy a relatively large amount of editorial freedom. On the other hand, they do think they get stuck with covering "soft" news like childcare issues or more feature-oriented stories.

Males and females alike agreed that more women are needed in the decision-making positions in Montana's newspapers, but how to get more women in the higher editorial positions is not as easily agreed upon. Most favored one alternative solution--a corporate push to recruit and promote women in the newsroom, an affirmative action policy that has worked for large national news organizations like Gannett.

A further discussion of the questions highlighted in the methodology section follows.

"Not surprised"

"Not surprised," but not happy either about what the national

¹³Mills, A Place in the News, p. viii.

and local data showed was the response that echoed from every reporter and editor interviewed. "Generally ... they reflect sexism and racism," said Gary Hoseman, managing editor of the *Great Falls Tribune*.

Environmental reporter Sherry Devlin of the *Missoulian* said that the predominance of news stories written by males reflects a continuing problem in the industry with "women still not typically having the hard news beat that would get them on the front page."

Cindy King, night editor at the *Helena Independent Record*, was surprised about the relatively small number of front page stories written by females because she felt the press in general has attempted to get more women in media. "If there are female reporters there (in the newsroom) why are there not more female stories on the front page?" she asked.

The issue of gender in the newsrooms clearly is not as simplistic a matter as counting bylines and aspiring to an equal distribution of bylines among men and women. The only female editor at the *Great Falls Tribune*, Linda Caricaburu, recently promoted to special projects editor from regional editor, pointed out, "It's important to have diversity in the newsroom and on the news pages." She believes it is worthwhile looking at the role of women in the press. But, she thinks we must also be aware of how we interpret the numbers from studies such as this so as to not give a limited or skewed picture of the newspaper:

I think that if they (the readers) see all male bylines, for instance, there's an assumption that we have a male newsroom--and often times maybe the entire copy desk is women, or maybe the editors who made the assignments were women. And even of more concern is when they (the studies) say, for instance, that all of the stories on page one quoted men or had photos of men, and therefore this newspaper ignores women, is not necessarily

legitimate.

Caricaburu pointed out that the persons who most often are the sources of information are rarely female. "If anyone expects, because our population is close to half men and half women, that our newspapers should always be half men and half women isn't being realistic about the balance of power," she said. Moseman agreed that the people in positions of authority are generally white males and "that would explain why people who are quoted in news stories are even more disproportionate than those who are writing the stories themselves."

Devlin conceded that in some respects the numbers reflect how papers rely on official sources who traditionally are male. But, she said, "we haven't done a good job of looking for alternative sources of commentary and specifically to have those sources be women."

It is interesting and important to note that the explanations offered above are analogous to observations made nearly 15 years ago. In a study published in 1978, Robinson states:

In our society, it is not women but men who carry high community rank, are in leadership positions or enjoy expert status. As a result, stories with female news makers will not appear as frequently as stories with male news makers, and if they do, women news makers will most likely be of lesser status.¹⁴

Robinson and Caricaburu are not alone in pointing out this phenomenon in society. Margaret Gallagher, a noted international media consultant and specialist on the issue of women in the media, said that

¹⁴Robinson, Women, Media Access, p. 91.

news is associated with important events and, as such, reflects a male social order.¹⁵ This probably reflects how little society as a whole has changed over the last couple of decades despite the feminist movement of the 70s that brought more women into the workforce.

Traditional beats still emphasized.

Whether an issue is front page news, or news at all, is guided by general news judgment and newspapers' own policies. What constitutes news and receives front page placement is a much discussed topic. It is an interesting question that relates to gender and the placement of stories and could affect the results of this analysis, but that research is beyond the scope of this study.

Despite different guidelines and policies as to what goes on the front page, the journalists interviewed here said they believe traditional beats such as government, cops, courts, and business are still emphasized by Montana newspapers. These beats are usually designated as "hard news" beats and are often covered by men, which may help explain why more male bylines appear on the front page.

Mea Andrews, health and senior citizens reporter at the *Missoulian*, said she is not surprised at this: "Not because women aren't present in the newsroom, but the view of front page editors ... is still a very traditional approach to news. And what we classify as front page stuff ... in some newspapers--would be the same thing that we used 15 years

¹⁵Margaret Gallagher, Unequal opportunities, (Paris, UNESCO 1987), p.

ago. [M]en tend to cover those more-- politics and financial things." In Andrews' view "newsrooms at least have paid a lot of lip service to moving away from meeting coverage, and basic coverage, and straight political stuff [news]. And my sense is that they have done that, but that's what still ends up on page one a lot of [the] time."

She said she was surprised that the trends have not improved more over time because she has sensed a big change the last decade in what people in general are interested in. "They want something else from their newspaper," she added.

Government and politics have generally been viewed as men's news,¹⁶ and although women have some interest in government news, a study from 1978 shows "women expressed far heavier interest than men in human interest stories, in crime and accident tales and in features covering home and garden information."¹⁷ Women's interests have probably changed some towards more substantive issues since that study, but a survey done for the *Missoulian* shows that women tend to be more interested than men in human interest stories such as childcare and education.¹⁸

At the *Great Falls Tribune*, Caricaburu said the newspaper's policy is to emphasize government because it views the publication as a "paper of record." "Sometimes," she said, "we have covered government to

¹⁶Mills, *A Place in the News*, p.110.

¹⁷Doris A. Graber, "Agenda-Setting: Are there women's Perspectives." In *Women and the News*, ed. Laurily Keir Epstein (New York: Hastings House, 1978), 33, 34.

¹⁸Survey for *Missoulian*, November 1990.

the exclusion of other issues." Dave Fenner, who covers city and county governments for the *Tribune*, agreed and characterized the paper as a "hard news paper." However, he said Gannett's emphasis on feature/lifestyles issues is affecting the paper. In June, the *Tribune* added a daily lifestyle section.

Journalists at the *Helena Independent Record*, said the paper tends to emphasize business news and government issues with a local angle.

It is important to note that the female journalists do not resent such coverage, but would like to broaden the range of issues that receive front page placement.

Different priorities.

Most interviewees were reluctant to separate men's issues from women's issues. Andrews (*Missoulian*) believes that male and female issues are not clear cut. Bill Skidmore, city editor for the *Helena Independent Record*, stated that he thinks "of issues in terms of people." Dave Fenner, *Great Falls Tribune*, said, "It probably isn't right to define issues as men's issues and women's issues." However, Grant Sasek, regional reporter for the *Independent Record*, believes that women have different interests and "there are things that strike them as being more important--perhaps [the] childcare issue."

Andrews suggested that it may not be the issues themselves that differ but the way they are covered, as in the instance of business news. "I think we tend not to cover the side of business that would be most of interest to women. So, while the subject business is of interest

to both [sexes] the way newspapers tend to cover it is from a very male point of view," she said.

A survey conducted for the *Missoulian* on readers' interest in finding out more about various issues to be discussed in the 1991 Legislature, showed that men and women have different priorities. Among the options given in the survey, men listed tax reform affecting individuals, Montana university system funding, and creation of jobs and economic development as the top three on their list, while women chose education in grades K through 12, health care availability and cost, and tax reform affecting individuals as their top three.¹⁹

One example points to how the definition of male and female "interests" can change in the newsroom. Abortion is probably the women's issue that has drawn most front-page coverage. Mills says in her book that "...abortion would not have become the issue that it is today if no women had stepped into newsrooms and boardroom and squadrooms."²⁰ Today, both men and women have covered the abortion story because it exploded into a major political issue.²¹ Andrews confirms this development in her own newsroom: "Abortion has become really front-page news. Men cover it because [it has] a higher status. It's got a political angle to it.... In our newsroom, women may have covered it more, but I don't think too many men won't cover it."

¹⁹ibid.

²⁰Mills, A Place in the News, p. 243.

²¹ibid.

Coverage of "men's" and "women's" issues.

Since no one clearly viewed men's and women's issues as separate issues, it was difficult for the journalists interviewed to assess how well their paper covers the respective stories. However, in discussing what beats are emphasized, most reporters mentioned business, courts, cops, and government--the issues more closely associated with men. Pingree and Hawkins said "indeed conscious discrimination is not necessary with the beat structure, power imbalances and an issue-orientation all working against women."²²

Missoulian reporter Sherry Devlin said it is more a distinction of interest in that women and men rank issues differently. "I think women tend to have--whether it's women readers or women reporters or editors-- ... a more diverse range of interest that would include some of the social issues and the family issues that might not be ... on even the top five priorities of what male readers or male editors and reporters might have."

It appears that these reporters suggest that issues generally identified with women are not being covered well enough by their newspapers.

Female influence? Yes and no.

²²Pingree and Hawkins, News definitions, p.122.

This study has shown that the majority of reporters and editors for these three Montana papers are men. Where does this leave females in terms of influencing what gets covered and where in the paper it is placed?

Editor Linda Caricaburu said she feels she has as much influence in the *Great Falls Tribune* newsroom as the men do. "At least here, I haven't seen that as a problem.... I feel like I'm treated as an equal," she said. "I think there is a conscious effort to do that in this newsroom." As an editor, Caricaburu makes assignments, and as the night editor when the Legislature was in session, she decided where stories were placed.

At the *Missoulian* sentiments are slightly different. "In terms of hard news there are no women who are editors who are directly determining what stories are covered and where they are placed ... The real day to day nuts and bolts decisions on what's going to get covered and where it's going to be in the newspaper are made by men," Devlin said. But she added she never counts out the influence reporters have on what gets covered. Particularly, beat reporters who are intimately familiar with stories in their realm of coverage have influence over what gets covered, she said.

Her colleague, reporter Mea Andrews, agreed that "reporters have a lot of power by what we choose to write about." The fact that female reporters make up 36 percent of the reporting staff at the *Missoulian* suggests that females may have a fair amount of influence over what gets printed in the newspaper. Lisa Meister of the *Helena*

Independent Record voiced similar sentiments: "We pretty much say (to the editors) what stories we are working on today. I'm definitely involved and my involvement is sought." In fact, Andrews' observation is particularly relevant to all three newspapers studied here. Reporters at smaller newspapers generally enjoy a greater editorial freedom than at larger papers. How exactly this affects what issues get covered is difficult to say as the individual newspaper's policies and guidelines as to what is news tends to differ. In addition, this study was designed only to measure the frequency of front page and section front stories written by females, the frequency of females used as sources in stories and in photos, and not to discuss the definition of news.

The "glass-ceiling"

National trends show that females are underrepresented in newsroom management--a trend this study shows applies to Montana as well. For example, at the *Great Falls Tribune* one out of five editors is female--a situation Roseman described this way: "We're not grossly underrepresented by women in the newsroom, but ... in the management ... there's only one. That's Linda (Caricaburu)."

Promoted to regional editor at the age of 30, Caricaburu considers her chances for advancement excellent. "When you've got a company like Gannett that owns the *Tribune*, they put so much emphasis on hiring, promoting and retaining women and minorities that in some cases we may have a better shot than the men," she said. But she added she felt that the women in her newsroom in some cases have not wanted to be

promoted because of their family responsibilities. Today women are still primary caretakers and that hinders them in moving up. Often, women do not want to work nights and in certain editor positions that is necessary.

Reasonable solutions such as part-times jobs have been tried successfully at several newspapers in order to help the work situation for women with families. Andrews also suggested the possibility of shared jobs. Other alternatives are on-site child care that besides the daily needs also could serve as a solution when unplanned, but necessary (because of news events) evening or weekend shifts occur. Reality is that family issues are felt in the newsroom and "newspapers are bending the rules in order to retain women who want neither the Superwoman's exhaustion and guilt nor the frustration of stagnating in professional backwaters or abandoning the newsroom altogether."²³

Cindy King, a mother in her mid-thirties and the only female editor at the *Helena Independent Record*, said the timing for her promotion was fortunate. The small size of the newspaper and the fact that the current editors are only in their forties and have stayed with the paper for several years, limits her possibilities for advancement, she said. However, King was at the right place at the right time. An editor position at her paper opened up at a time when she felt professionally mature enough to take it on. In addition, she had editors who encouraged her to apply for that position. She said her managing editor has outlined a career track he would like to see her pursue. However, all these

²³Lynda McDonnell, "There's Been a Change in the Newsroom," *Nieman Reports*, XLII, No. 4 (Winter 1989), 24.

factors may mean that she will stay in the same job for several more years. King added that in her present position there were still many things to learn.

The other women journalists interviewed had different experiences and views on attempting career advancement. Devlin at the *Missoulian* said, "I guess I wouldn't see any opportunity for that (advancement)." She has been a reporter for 16 years and said she feels she would have needed to start on the editor's track earlier. "It wasn't that somebody was trying to keep me from doing those things, but nobody ever really suggested it either or encouraged me to do that," she said. One common explanation for why so few females are in management is lack of, or less experience, than their male counterparts. But Devlin said she wouldn't even apply now.

Andrews expressed similar sentiments. "I think I'm a perfect example of someone who has decided there is no way to move beyond the glass ceiling so I have contented myself with something below it," said Andrews, a reporter with 15 years of experience. She said the "glass ceiling" sounds like a cliché, but it is there. However, she noted that part of the problem is that so few positions come open. "You get into a newsroom this size where people are in the middle age... They're not moving any place." She also said that the pressures of family still weigh heavier on females than males and help to explain why fewer females make it into management positions. Devlin agreed, saying that she is not willing to work the night hours that assistant editors do, which is one route to reach top editorial jobs.

These statements add weight to the suggestion noted in chapter

one that Montana newspapers are not typical entry-level newspapers. In fact, Andrews and Devlin are examples of female journalists who stay in reporter-jobs for long periods of time partly due to a lack of openings in middle management positions.

Amber Underhill of the *Great Falls Tribune* and Meister of the *Helena Independent Record* are both in their first professional jobs. "I like to think [opportunities for advancement] are good," Underhill said. Although Gannett is known for affirmative policies to advance females, she said she would not want to get promoted solely based on her gender, but also in recognition of her hard work and qualifications. Meister said she feels you have to share certain corporate goals and values (to be a "corporate player") to advance to management jobs--which she said she is not, hence limiting her opportunities for advancement.

Corporate push.

Gannett has earned a reputation as a progressive news corporation through its emphasis on hiring and promoting females and minorities at its papers.²⁴ As a result of Gannett buying the *Tribune* about a year ago, managing editor Moseman has more programs to assist him in hiring. For example, Gannett runs the earlier mentioned All American Program, which provides financial resources and serves as a referral agency for potential employees. It seems Moseman's policy of having one female applicant and one minority applicant for every position available

²⁴Mills, A Place in the News, p. 300.

came after encouragement from Gannett's evaluation of the *Tribune*. But, Moseman also seemed concerned with the relatively few women he has in his newsroom, especially in management: "That's something we're working to solve."

Gannett has chosen to use corporate policy to create a more diverse work force in the newsrooms of its papers. It clearly has worked, as Gannett is the news organization with the largest number of women and minorities in all its ranks.²⁵ Other news organizations like Knight-Ridder are following suit.²⁶ How do Montana journalists react to such a corporate push?

"Once you start thinking about the purpose of it (Gannett's corporate policy) then the rationale behind it becomes less objectional because there really is no excuse. And the fact of the matter is we do have women and race underrepresented in our newsroom, and those perspectives are missing," Moseman said.

Devlin and Andrews at the *Missoulian* both felt a corporate policy would be a good idea. "We have to do something to change the statistics," Devlin said, but added that the papers need to be careful not to select journalists only based on gender and not on qualifications because then "we set them up to fail." Andrews said only the female reporters in her newsroom are interested in the gender issue, and "it's really easy for people to dismiss lower end people who are bringing these things up." On the other hand, she said, "When somebody up above you says

²⁵ibid.

²⁶ibid., 289.

this is what you're going to do then it gets done."

Grant Sasek, a reporter at the *Independent Record*, does not like the idea of such a corporate policy. "It is a problem that's not going to be solved by necessarily not taking the most qualified person for the job, but trying to make sure that there's a nice cross-section of gender and race. The problem I think is much deeper in society than that and it's not going to be fixed by somehow mandating that (diversity) in the newsroom," he said.

All the females interviewed for this study felt that a corporate push for diversity in the newspapers was a good idea. Some of the female journalists pointed out that it is an alternative way to change the employment patterns at newspapers and may succeed where other methods have failed.

Women still "stuck" with "women's stories"

Some of the female journalists interviewed said there are some issues that males still won't cover. This was in spite of the fact that most of the journalists were reluctant to categorize issues by whether they were women's issues. Andrews said, "I still think today if you ask certain men to write a childcare story, they would say no way--for whatever reason, I don't know, because it's beneath them?" One coping technique she said the female reporters in the newsroom used was "to stand back and say: 'we won't do some of these stories.' If the men don't think they're important to do themselves then we will not do them just because we're women and we should be interested in them." For example, Andrews

decided to not cover abortion issues for a year in 1988, to see if anyone else thought these issues were important. Indeed, some of the male reporters started to cover the issue. But, Andrew ended up not covering any such stories since that decision partly because editors did not assign those stories to her and she started covering other issues. She said it is not to women journalists' credit to not cover certain stories just to make a statement as that ultimately hurts the reader.

At the *Independent Record*'s feature meetings, Meister said that certain stories, the issue of midwifery being an example, got "passed on to us because we're female ... so obviously we have a better understanding or something." She also said that in her view the opposite also happens--that "some of the more rugged outdoor kind of stories go to males." Bill Skidmore, city editor at the paper, makes some of these assignments, but he said he tries "to send the best reporter for the job ... I would be interested in the skills of the individual reporter ... the amount of smarts and experience."

"Dear"

Certain beats that females cover may expose them to more sexist behavior from interview subjects because most sources are male. In general though, it seems female journalists are treated a little differently when they are out on the job.

Meister, King, Andrews, and Devlin said they are often called "dear" by their male sources. Underhill said because three of the copy desk editors at the *Great Falls Tribune* are female the men in the

newsroom named them the "copy desk babes." Neither of these "nicknames" bother these journalists to a great extent, but they do question whether male reporters ever have similar experiences. Thus, even if that practice is not specifically objectionable, the women still note the difference in treatment.

At the time of the interview with Dave Fenner, he said he had become increasingly aware of the issue of gender and had made some observations. He said he had noticed one editor (male) was "big on nicknames" that played on gender, but only for the females in the newsroom. "I don't know if that means he (the editor) takes them less serious," Fenner said. He also recalled an incident concerning a female reporter who had difficulty getting some information from her sources. This person was known as a confrontational reporter and when approaching her editor with the problem, he said, "Why don't you sweeten them up a little." Fenner said he didn't think an editor would say that to a male reporter.

Meister said she has been asked out on a date by sources on a couple of occasions. "I know that I don't bring that on," she said, and "I have yet to hear a male reporter tell that he's been asked out by any of his sources."

Devlin said she tends to ignore it when being called "dear." "It's a difficult situation to deal with. I have to go back to these sources," she said, adding she tries to be matter-of-fact when interviewing sources.

Women need mentors.

Linda Caricaburu and Cindy King were both supported and "helped along" by male editors in their newsrooms in reaching the editor positions they now hold. Caricaburu believes networking is important and that women need to work their way into men's networks. She said she would like "to be there" for a young female: "We have to help each other along. I believe that's critical."

King said her supervisors review her performance and ask if she still feels as if she is growing: "They're a little concerned that I don't feel trapped and want to leave." King believes the male editors at the *Independent Record* are not "in any way afraid of other women being there. They would welcome other women there if there were the positions and women applicants who were qualified."

Mentors have played an important role for King and Caricaburu in their career advancements. Devlin and Andrews conceded that mentors are essential for both men and women who want to advance. They both believe that the men in their newsrooms have mentor relationships, but do not see the same for females. Devlin said:

There aren't upper-level women to serve as mentors for lower-level women, but generally, men haven't taken that upon themselves. Maybe they haven't realized that it was necessary. I do see mentoring going on between men and men, and I see it successfully moving men into editorial jobs or higher level jobs.

Andrews said she has "concluded that this mentoring is probably the key to allow people to succeed," but she still thinks "there is a reluctance to pull women up."

On the other hand, Andrews, Devlin, and Caricaburu pointed out that females themselves are not necessarily helping each other. "We've been very hard on the women who moved up... We have not cut them one minute of slack," Devlin said.

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Page 68 omitted in numbering.

CHAPTER 4

Summary and Conclusion

This study focused principally on the role of women on the staffs of three Montana newspapers. It also considered female employment patterns at the papers, bylines of females, sources and photos as they appeared on the front pages and section fronts. Data were drawn from quantitative analyses and qualitative interviews. Within this context, the study examined whether Montana newspapers reflected national trends.

National trends for female employment in newspapers do not exactly conform to the patterns observed for the *Great Falls Tribune*, *Helena Independent Record*, and *Missoulian* --three dailies in Montana. The *Missoulian*'s proportion of female employees was six percent above the regional average; however, the other two papers deviated by only two percent. A large proportion of the females worked in support departments such as advertising and accounting. Women also comprised a larger proportion of managers in these departments than in the newsrooms. These observations largely

support the patterns observed on the national level.

The newspapers reviewed here were at or slightly below national averages for proportion of females on the newsroom staff. A survey of each staff revealed that 14 percent of editors were female. At the *Missoulian* two out of six assistant editors were female. The *Missoulian* was the only paper with this intermediate job classification.

A tabulation of bylines revealed that female reporters' stories appeared less frequently on the *Tribune's* and *Independent Record's* front pages than the national average--with the *Tribune* substantially lower. The *Missoulian*, on the other hand, featured female bylines more frequently than the national trends indicate, reflecting the fact that it had more female reporters in its newsroom than the other two Montana dailies. Another explanation may be found in how news assignments were made. During March, the *Tribune* did not have a female beat reporter (one was hired in July) while the *Missoulian* had female reporters on several beats with high visibility: i.e., environment and higher education.

The differences between national and local trends in the proportion of male to female bylines on the section fronts was not as great as found on the front pages. The exception to this was the front page of the sports section. None of these Montana newspapers has a female sports writer. Hence, there were no local female bylines for this section. The Associated Press wire service was the source of four or five stories written by females on the sport section fronts examined. Sports news appears to be a male bastion in

Montana journalism.

When compared to the national average, the *Helena Independent Record* used 10 percent more female sources in its front page stories. The *Great Falls Tribune* and *Missoulian* were only slightly above the national average. A tabulation of the local news section front stories revealed a reversed pattern--23 percent of the *Tribune*, 14 percent of the *Missoulian*, and 11 percent of the *Helena Independent Record* sources were female. In stories on the sports section front, the frequency of female sources is lower than for the other sections. All three newspapers used female sources for sports stories only 10 percent of the time. Finally, the *Independent Record* and the *Missoulian* were close to the national average for females pictured in photos on the front page. The *Great Falls Tribune* was 10 percent lower than the national trend.

It is interesting to note that the *Great Falls Tribune*, owned by Gannett since the spring of 1990, a news organization recognized for its affirmative action policy, ranks lower than the other two other Montana papers in all three variables measured on the front page.

In general, the findings showed that males outnumbered females in all categories studied. This suggests that, statistically, journalism remains a male-dominated field in Montana. Additionally, there are no earlier studies to compare with these data. However, this study included interviews with female journalists with more than 10 years' experience. They said they have seen improvement in conditions for female journalists in Montana, but they commented

that the progress is slow. This also seems to reflect national tendencies showing only a change of three percent over the past two years in female bylines appearing on the front pages of the nation's 10 largest newspapers.¹

Comparing the three papers, the *Missoulian* exceeded national standards for female involvement in the most categories of this study. It is also interesting to note that the female journalists at that paper seemed more aware of and critical of gender issues within the organization and in the newspaper's coverage. The "manifesto" that female reporters at the paper wrote three years ago probably relates to this. Mea Andrews, one of the reporters who signed the document, said the "manifesto" caused her male colleagues to "get sick" of the gender issues and made "people like me shut up and more carefully choose my battles." But the female reporters also believed it caused some changes in story assignments which may have resulted in higher frequencies of female bylines on the front page.

It was not possible to get a copy of the "manifesto" for this study. Andrews, who said she no longer owns a copy, said even if she had had one, she would not have shared it. She said she viewed it as an internal document meant for her newspaper's editors. In addition, Andrews said it was not so much the content of the "manifesto" that created backlash for her and other female reporters at the paper, but more the circumstances surrounding its creation

¹Garneau, "ASNE survey," 13.

and reception.² Editors at the paper felt the female reporters had deceived them by going behind their backs to discuss the issue instead of going directly to their supervisors.³

Concerning gender distribution in management, only a small percentage of females reach management/editor positions, leaving females underrepresented in the decision-making level of local newspapers. The data suggest that the "glass ceiling" does exist for females in these newsrooms and the interviews showed that female journalists do perceive it to be there. However, in these three Montana dailies there also is a lack of job mobility leading to very few management positions opening up for those lower in the organizational hierarchy. This limits the chances of advancement for both women and men.

One suggested way to increase the proportion of females in editor and management positions is to emphasize mentor relationships--several of the female journalists interviewed for this study felt very strongly about this. Male editors need to become mentors for female reporters as well as the male reporters. And, perhaps more importantly, when females reach management positions, they need to support other females by acting as mentors.

Based on this study, it appears that many females are assigned to beats and stories that do not traditionally receive front page

²Reporter Mea Andrews of the *Missoulian*, interview by author, July 29, 1991, Missoula, notes and tape recording.

³ibid.

play. When females are assigned to important beats, they get more front page bylines--the *Missoulian* supports this assumption. The solution then is simple: newspapers need to hire more women to do important beat stories. Even less frequent than female bylines is the use of female sources in news stories. Most of the journalists I talked to said this is because their stories reflect society and society does not have women in positions of authority. As mentioned in the introduction, authority is still the main qualifying factor for a news source.

If one believes newspapers can change cultural values and beliefs, the solution is simple--hire more women, and seek out more women as sources of information for news stories. Pingree and Hawkins believe this is a viable solution:

The notion of changing coverage of women by a work force change does make some sense if we limit ourselves to getting more women as reporters and editors. Women journalists probably are less stereotyped in the interests they ascribe to their audience, and also are more likely to share interests with the women in their audience, and both these characteristics probably will lead to more coverage of women.⁴

If on the other hand, one believes that newspapers are simply a reflection of social conditions, any changes in the proportion of women used as sources or represented in photos will have to wait for changes in society at large.

Are there enough female journalists for Montana newspapers to hire? The University of Montana School of Journalism's graduating class in print journalism for the last five years has had 50 percent

⁴Pingree and Hawkins, News Definitions, 129.

female students:

<u>Graduating year</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>
1986-1987	7	12
1987-1988	16	18
1988-1989	16	12
1989-1990	10	10
1990-1991	17	10
<hr/>		
Total last 5 years	66	62 ⁵
<hr/>		

These statistics show that more female than male print journalism students have graduated from UM in the last five years. Clearly, the UM School of Journalism is turning out females who have similar backgrounds and qualifications as male graduates. The answer to why the males dominate news staffs and their bylines appear on the front page in greater frequency must lie somewhere else. The *Great Falls Tribune's* managing editor, Gary Moseman, said that although he has taken steps to try to recruit females in particular, there is a lack of female applicants for jobs at his paper. Sherry Devlin of the *Missoulian* calls that explanation "a classic cop-out." This difference in opinion leads to the question of where do female UM journalism graduates go if they do not appear on front page bylines of Montana newspapers? Charlie

⁵University of Montana School of Journalism, Dean Charlie Hood, provided data over the phone, 10 December 1991.

Hood, dean of UM's School of Journalism, said there is an even breakdown between male and female students in terms of interest in newspaper work. Hood thought Moseman was right about females not applying for jobs, but emphasized that when entry-level positions come open there may not be a qualified female UM graduate available, and when those students are looking for job there are no openings in Montana. However, those factors are the same for male students. Nonetheless, out of the *Independent Record's* five reporters four are UM graduates, but only one is female. In addition, Hood said that because the state is a relatively small market "not all kind find jobs in Montana and several go out of state." National studies show that more females than males work in related fields such as public relations. Hood confirms this trend among UM students.

Possible future research in this area could examine whether UM students go out of state for journalism jobs, get jobs in related fields such as public relations, or take jobs in unrelated fields. In addition to describing current hiring patterns, this kind of study could illuminate alternative explanations for why there are fewer female than male bylines on the front page and few female editors.

The issue of females in newspaper management positions is inextricably tied to the role of being a family member. American culture is still such that professional women frequently make concessions to families that are not made by men in similar positions. The journalists interviewed for this study brought this up as a concern and factor in their reporter jobs, editor jobs, and

ambitions. Newspaper managers and researchers now identify two different career tracks for women--the "fast-track" and the "mommy-track." In a 1989 article by Linda McDonnell for *Nieman Reports*, Irene Nolan, at the time managing editor of *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, said that "any newsroom that wants more women in management has no choice but to accommodate family needs."⁶

The introduction noted that "smaller newspapers to some extent predict the future of larger newspapers since editors of the smaller newspapers hire more entry level people who gradually move up."⁷ If the smaller papers serve as a major source of recruitment of reporters and editors for the larger papers, then it appears that larger papers will not increase the number of female employees in the newsroom.

In closing, Leon Sigal of Wesleyan University said:

Until women are no longer discriminated against in society as a whole, they will continue to face an uphill battle to put themselves and their issues before the general public.⁸

It seems that if the female journalists of today's generation are to play a greater role in making decisions at American newspapers, they cannot wait for social values to change at some unspecified time. They must actively promote their own interests.

⁶McDonnell, There's Been a Change, 24.

⁷ASNE, The Changing Face, 28.

⁸Leon Sigal, "Defining News Organizationally: News Definitions in Practice," in Women and the News, ed. Laurily Keir Epstein (New York: Hastings House, 1978), 133.

Daily Newspaper Audience (Average weekdy)
(all figures in 000s)

<u>SMRB Report Year:</u>	<u>Total Adults</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
1981	107,944	51,703	56,242
1982	108,366	52,399	55,967
1983	109,363	52,933	56,430
1984	109,190	52,459	56,731
1985*	108,812	53,718	55,094

Daily Newspaper Audience (Average Weekdy)

<u>SMRB Report Year:</u>	<u>Total Adults</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
1981	68%	69%	67%
1982	67%	69%	65%
1983	66%	68%	65%
1984	65%	66%	64%
1985*	64%	67%	62%

* SMRB methodology for estimating the size of the average weekday audience was changed in the 1985 report year.

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, "Study of Media and Markets"

Sunday\Weekend Newspaper Audience (Average Weekly)
(all figures in 000s)

<u>SMRB Report Year:</u>	<u>Total Adults</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
1981	106,237	51,417	54,819
1982	107,706	51,043	56,662
1983	108,363	52,126	56,226
1984	109,661	51,929	57,732
1985	110,255	52,879	57,376

Sunday\Weekend Newspaper Audience (Average Weekly)

<u>SMRB Report Year:</u>	<u>Total Adults</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
1981	67%	69%	65%
1982	67%	67%	66%
1983	66%	67%	65%
1984	65%	66%	65%
1985	65%	66%	64%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, "Study of Media and Markets"

APPENDIX 2.

This appendix show the data collected from the *Great Falls Tribune*, *Helena Independent Record*, and *Missoulian* for sections fronts that are not published daily. The data are presented as graphs to be congruent with the data included in the results of the study.

Figure 3-28. Great Falls Tribune.
Headings included food, business, outdoors and art.

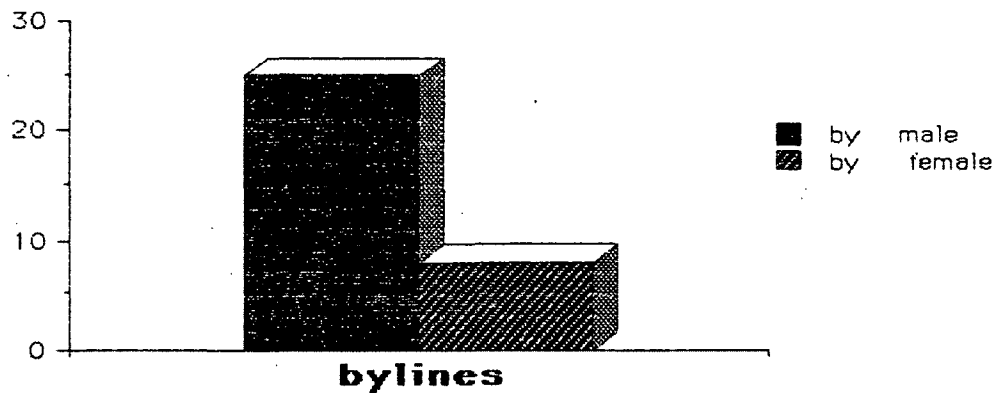


Figure 3-29. Great Falls Tribune. Section fronts
Headings included business, food, outdoors and art.

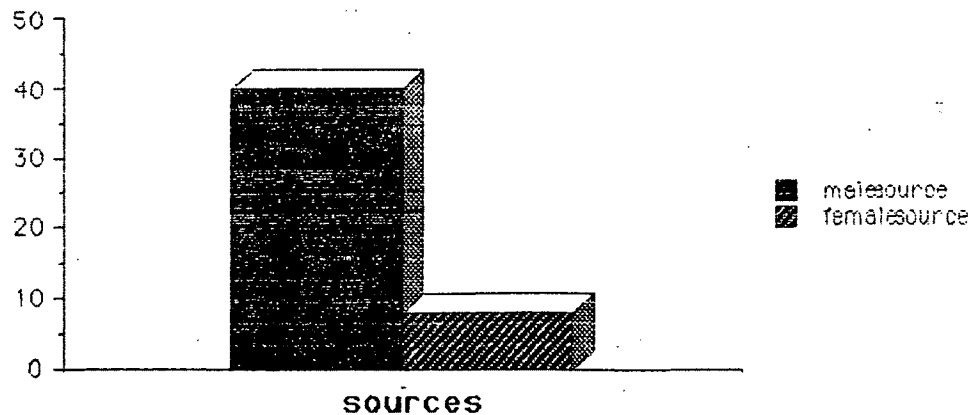


Figure 3-30. Great Falls Tribune.

Headings included business, food,

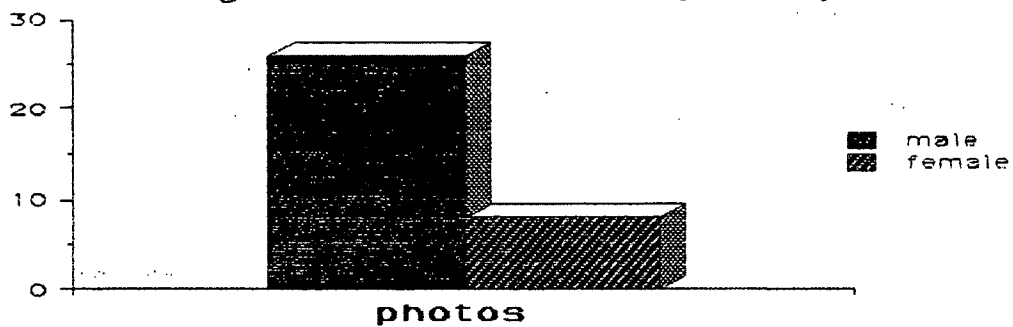


Figure 3-31. Helena Independent Record. Section

Headings included business, Sunday, Your money and doers

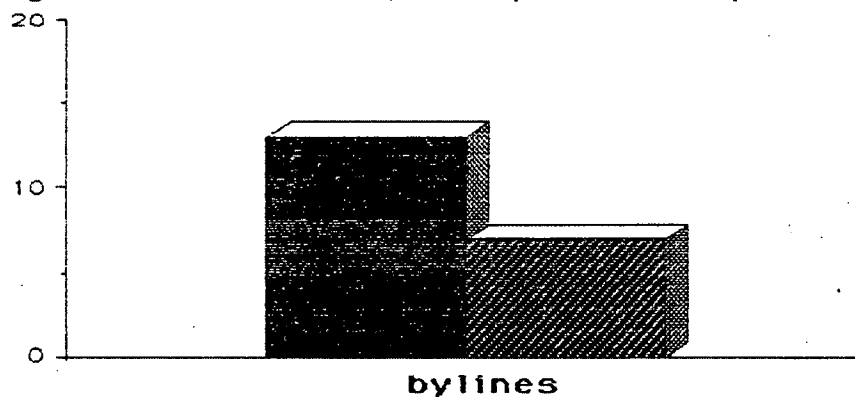


Figure 3-32. Helena Independent Record. Section fronts-sources.

Headings included business, Sunday, Your money and doers and thinkers.

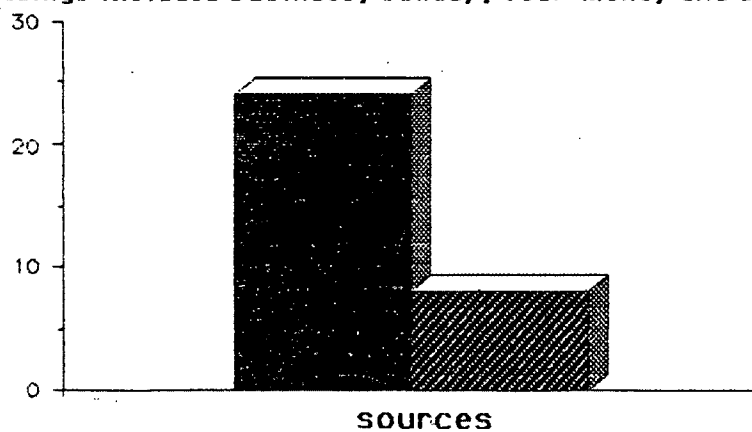


Figure 3-33. Helena Independent Record. Section fronts
Headings included business, Sunday, Your money, and doers and thinkers.

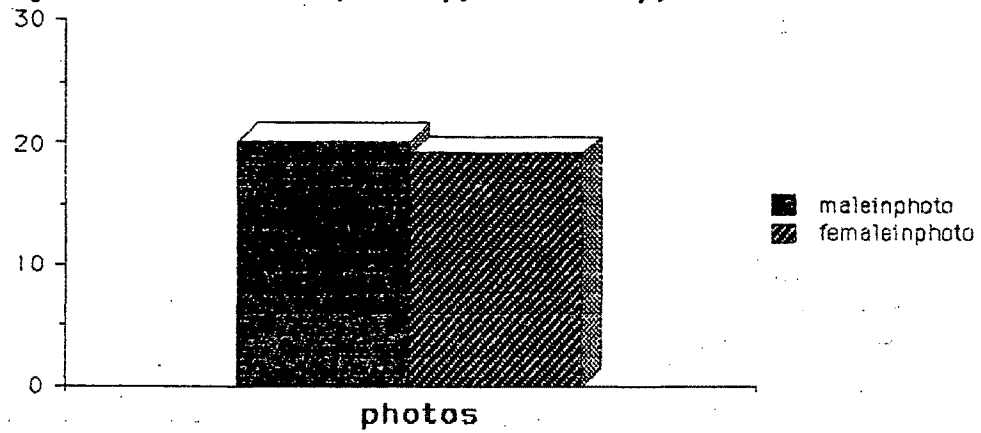


Figure 3-34. Missoulian. Section

Headings included business, family, outdoors and travel.

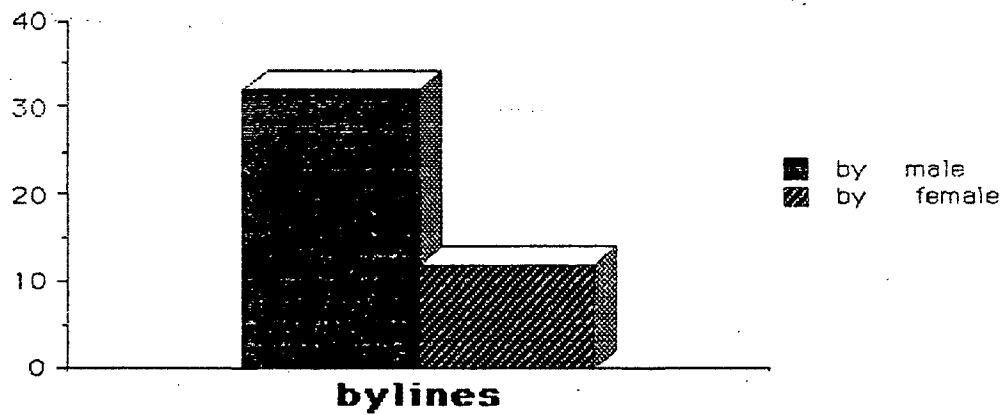
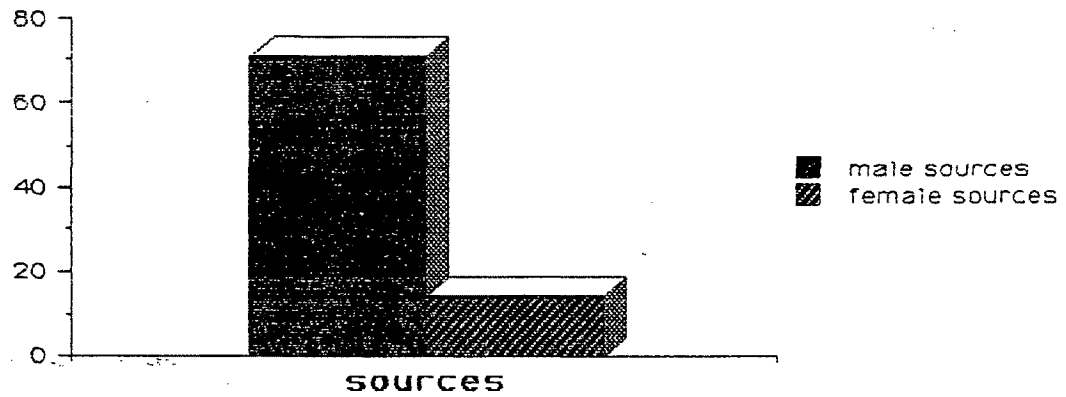
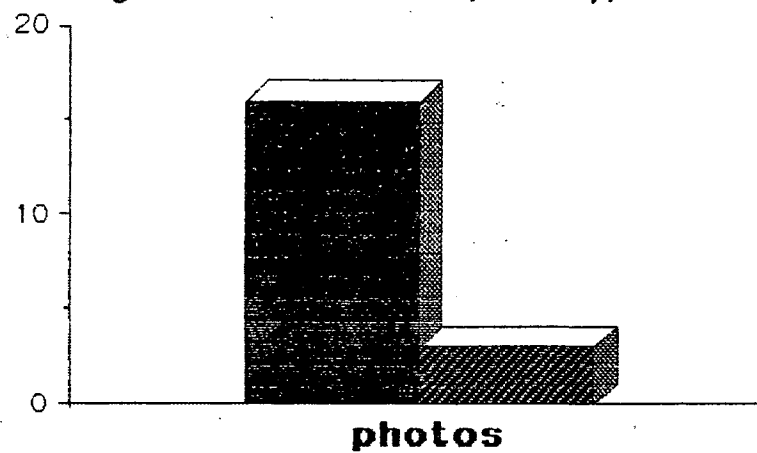


Figure 3-35. Missoulain. Section fronts

Headings included business, family, outdoors and travel.

**Figure 3-36. Missoulain. Section**

Headings included business, family, outdoors and travel.



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